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A

CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED,

TO

TURN AND LIVE;

AND ACCEPT OF MERCY, WHILE MERCY MAY BE HAD; AS EVER THEY WILL FIND MERCY, IN THE DAY OF THEIR EXTREMITY, FROM THE LIVING GOD.

By the late REVEREND and PIOUS

Mr. RICHARD BAXTER.

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MDCCXCIII.

A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

AUTHOR;

And the great Succeſs which attended the Call when firſt publiſhed.

IT may be proper to prefix an account of this book given by Mr. Baxter himſelf, which was found in his ſtudy after his death, in his own words.

"I publiſhed a ſhort Treatiſe on converſion, intitled, *A Call to the Unconverted.* The occaſion of this was my converſe with biſhop Uſher, while I was at London, who approving my method and directions for peace of conſcience, was importunate with me to write directions ſuited to the various ſtates of Chriſtians, and alſo againſt particular ſins: I reverenced the man, but diſregarded theſe perſuaſions, ſuppoſing I could do nothing but what is done better already; but when he was dead, his words went deeper to my mind, and I purpoſed to obey his counſel; yet ſo as that to the firſt ſort of men (the ungodly) I thought vehement perſuaſions meeter than directions only: and ſo for ſuch I publiſhed this little book, which God hath bleſſed with unexpected ſucceſs, beyond all the reſt that I have written, except the "*Saints' Reſt.*" In a little more than a year, there were about twenty thouſand of them printed by my own conſent, and about ten thouſand ſince, beſides many thouſand by ſtolen impreſſions, which poor men ſtole for lucre ſake. Through God's mercy, I have information of almoſt whole houſeholds converted by this ſmall book, which I ſet

ſo light by: and, as if all this in England, Scotland and Ireland, were not mercy enough to me, God (ſince I was ſilenced) hath ſent it over on his meſſage to many beyond the ſeas; for when Mr. Elliot had printed all the Bible in the Indian language, he next tranſlated this my "*Call to the Unconverted*," as he wrote to us here. And yet God would make ſome farther uſe of it; for Mr. Stoop, the paſtor of the French Church in London, being driven hence by the diſpleaſure of ſuperiors, was pleaſed to tranſlate it into French; I hope it will not be unprofitable there, nor in Germany, where it is printed in Dutch."

It may be proper alſo to mention Dr. Bates's account of the author, and of this uſeful Treatiſe.—In his ſermon, at Mr. Baxter's funeral, he thus ſays; "His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more converſions of ſinners to God than any printed in our time; and, while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover loſt ſouls.—There is a vigorous pulſe in them that keeps the reader awake and attentive."—His *Call to the Unconverted*, how ſmall in bulk, but how powerful in virtue! Truth ſpeaks in it with that authority and efficacy, that it makes the reader to lay his hand upon his heart, and find that he has a ſoul and a conſcience, though he lived before as if he had none. He told ſome friends that ſix brothers were converted by reading that Call, and that every week he received letters of ſome converted by his books. This he ſpake of with moſt humble thankfulneſs, that God was pleaſed to uſe him as an inſtrument for the ſalvation of ſouls.

Selfdenial and contempt of the world were ſhining graces in him. I never knew any perſon leſs indulgent to himſelf, and more indifferent to his temporal intereſt.

His patience was truly Chriſtian; he was tried by many afflictions. We are tender of our reputation. His name was obſcured under a cloud of detraction: many ſcandalous darts were thrown at him. He was accuſed for his *paraphraſe upon the*

New Teſtament, and condemned, *unheard*, to a pr'ſon, where he remained ſome years; but he was ſo far from being moved at the unrighteous proſecution, that he joyfully ſaid to a conſtant friend, "What could I deſire more of God, than having ſerved him to my power, I ſhould be called to ſuffer for him!"

His pacific ſpirit was a clear character of his being a child of God. How ardently he endeavoured to cement the breaches among us is publicly known. He ſaid to a friend, "I can as willingly be a martyr for love as for any article of the creed."—It is ſtrange, to aſtoniſhment, that thoſe who agree in the ſubſtantial and great points of the reformed religion, and are of different ſentiments only in things not ſo clear, nor of that moment as thoſe wherein they conſent, ſhould be of oppoſite parties.

Death reveals the ſecrets of the heart; then words are ſpoken with moſt feeling and leaſt affectation. This excellent ſaint was the ſame in his life and death: his laſt hours were ſpent in preparing others and himſelf to appear before God. He ſaid to his friends that viſited him, "You come hither to learn to die, I am not the only perſon that muſt go this way: I can aſſure you, that your whole life, be it ever ſo long, is little enough to prepare for death. Have a care of this va'n deceitful world and the luſts of the fleſh: be ſure you chooſe God for your portion, heaven for your home, God's glory for your end, his word for your rule, and then you need never fear but we ſhall meet with comfort."

Never was penitent ſinner more humble and debaſing, never was a ſincere believer more calm and comfortable. He acknowledged himſelf to be the vileſt dunghill worm (it was his uſual expreſſion) that ever went to heaven: he admired the divine condeſcenſion to man, after ſaying, "Lord what is man? what am I, a vile worm to the great God?" Many times he prayed, "God be merciful to me a ſinner!" and bleſſed God, that that was left upon record in the goſpel as an effectual prayer: He ſaid, "God may juſtly condemn me for the beſt duty I ever did;

and all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Chriſt," which he often prayed for.

After a ſlumber he awaked and ſaid, "I ſhall reſt from my labour." A miniſter then preſent ſaid, "and your works follow you." To whom he replied, "No works! I will leave out works, if God will grant me the other."—When a friend was comforting him with remembrance of the good many had received by his preaching and writings, he ſaid, "I was but a pen in God's hand, and what praiſe is due to a pen?"

His reſigned ſubmiſſion to the will of God, in his ſharp ſickneſs, was eminent. When extremity of pain conſtrained him earneſtly to pray to God for his releaſe by death, he would check himſelf: "it is not fit for me to preſcribe;" and ſaid, "when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt."

At another time he ſaid, "That he found great comfort and ſweetneſs in repeating the words of the Lord's prayer; and was ſorry that ſome good people were prejudiced againſt the uſe of it; for, there were all neceſſary petitions for ſoul and body contained in it."

At other times he gave excellent counſel to young miniſters that viſited him, and earneſtly prayed to God to bleſs their labours, and make them very ſucceſsful in converting many ſouls to Chriſt; and expreſſed great joy that they were of moderate peaceful ſpirits.

During his ſickneſs, when the queſtion was aſked, how he did, his reply was, "almoſt well." His joy was moſt remarkable when in his own apprehenſion death was neareſt: and his ſpiritual joy was at length conſummate in eternal joy.

Thus lived and died that bleſſed ſaint.—I have, without any artificial fiction in words, given a ſincere ſhort account of him. All our tears are below the juſt grief for ſuch an invaluable loſs. It is the comfort of his friends that he enjoys a bleſſed reward in heaven, and has left a precious remembrance on earth.

Now, bleſſed be the gracious God, that he was pleaſed to prolong the life of his ſervant, ſo uſeful and beneficial to the world, to a full age : that he has brought him ſlowly and ſafely to heaven.

I ſhall conclude this account with my own deliberate wiſh : "May I live the remainder of my life as entirely to the glory of God as he lived ; and when I ſhall come to the period of my life, may I die in the ſame bleſſed peace wherein he died : may I be with him in the kingdom of light and love for ever."

I ſhall alſo add Dr. Calamy's account of this treatiſe; his words are thus : "In 1657, Mr. Baxter publiſhed a *Call to the Unconverted* ; a book bleſſed by God with marvellous ſucceſs, in reclaiming perſons from their impieties. Twenty thouſand of them were printed and diſperſed in little more than a year. It was tranſlated into French, and Dutch, and other European languages ; and Mr. Elliot tranſlated it into the Indian language ; and Mr. Cotton Mather, in his life, gives an account of an Indian prince, who was ſo well affected with this book, that he ſat reading it, with tears in his eyes, till he died.

PREFACE.

PREFACE.

To all unſanctified Perſons that ſhall read this Book; eſpecially of my Hearers in the Borough and Pariſh of Kidderminſter.

MEN AND BRETHREN,

THE eternal God, that made you for a life everlaſting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had loſt it and yourſelves, being mindful of you in your ſin and miſery, hath indited the goſpel, and ſealed it by his ſpirit, and commanded his miniſters to preach it to the world, that pardon being freely offered you, and heaven being ſet before you, he might call you off from your fleſhly pleaſures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life that you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and paſt remedy. He ſendeth you not prophets or apoſtles, that receive their meſſage by immediate revelation; but yet he calleth you by his ordinary miniſters, who are commiſſioned by him to preach the ſame goſpel which Chriſt and his apoſtles firſt delivered. The Lord ſeeth how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlaſting things, as men that underſtand not what they have to do or ſuffer. He ſeeth how bold you are in ſin, and how fearleſs of his threatnings, and how careleſs of your ſouls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Chriſtians is in your mouths. He ſeeth the dreadful day at hand, when your ſorrows will begin, and you muſt lament all this with fruitleſs cries in torment and deſperation; and then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true converſion now prevent it not. In compaſſion of your ſinful miſerable ſouls, the Lord, that better knows your caſe than you can know it, hath made it our duty to ſpeak to you in his name, 2 *Cor.* v. 19. and to tell

you plainly of your ſin and miſery, and what will be your end, and how ſad a change you will ſhortly ſee, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at ſo dear a rate as the blood of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and made you ſo free and general a promiſe of pardon, and grace, and everlaſting glory; he commandeth us to tender all this to you, as the gift of God, and to intreat you to conſider of the neceſſity and worth of what he offereth.—He ſeeth and pitieth you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleaſures, and eagerly following childiſh toys, and waſting that ſhort and precious time for a thing of nought, in which you ſhould make ready for an everlaſting life; and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you, and tell you how you loſe your labour, and are about to loſe your ſouls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have, if you would hearken to his Call, *Iſa.* lv. 1, 2, 3. We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you on his meſſage, who hath charged us to preach, and be inſtant with you in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon, and to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and ſhew your tranſgreſſions and your ſins, *Iſa.* lviii. 1. 2 *Tim.* iv. 1, 2. But alas! to the grief of our ſouls and your own undoing, you ſtop your ears, you ſtiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and ſend us back to God with groans, to tell him that we have done his meſſage, but can do no good on you, nor ſcarcely get a ſober hearing.—Oh! that our eyes were as a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careleſs people, that have Chriſt before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and that have not hearts to know or value them! that might have Chriſt, and grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their wilful negligence and contempt! O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compaſſion to theſe miſerable ſouls, that we might caſt ourſelves even at their feet, and follow them to their houſes, and ſpeak to them with our bitter tears: for long have we preached to many of them in vain:

We ſtudy plainneſs to make them underſtand, and many of them will not underſtand us; we ſtudy ſerious piercing words, to make them feel, but they will not feel. If the greateſt matters would work with them, we ſhould awake them; if the ſweeteſt things would work, we ſhould entice them and win their hearts; if the moſt dreadful things would work, we ſhould at leaſt affright them from their wickedneſs; if truth and certainty would take with them, we ſhould ſoon convince them; if the God that made them, and the Chriſt that bought them, might be heard, the caſe would ſoon be altered with them; if ſcripture might be heard we ſhould ſoon prevail; if reaſon, even the beſt and ſtrongeſt reaſon, might be heard, we ſhould not doubt but we ſhould ſpeedily convince them; if experience might be heard, even their own experience, and the experience of all the world, the matter would be mended; yea, if the conſcience within them might be heard, the caſe would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then ſhall we do for them? if the dreadful God of heaven be ſlighted, who then ſhall be regarded? If the ineſtimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then ſhall be valued? If heaven have no deſirable glory with them, and everlaſting joys be nothing worth, if they can jeſt at hell, and dance about the bottomleſs pit, and play with the conſuming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it; what ſhall we do for ſuch ſouls as theſe?

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I ſhall do the meſſage to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in theſe ſtanding lines to convert you, or to condemn you; to change you, or to riſe up in judgment againſt you, and to be a witneſs to your faces, that once you had a ſerious call to turn. Hear, all you that are drudges of the world, and the ſervants of fleſh and Satan! that ſpend your days in looking after proſperity on earth, and drown your conſciences in drinking, and gluttony, and idleneſs, and fooliſh ſports, and know

your ſin, and yet will ſin, as if you ſet God at defiance, and bid him do his worſt and ſpare not! Hearken, all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no favour in the word or worſhip of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life, that are careleſs of your immortal ſouls, and never beſtow one hour in inquiring what caſe they are in, whether ſanctified or unſanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Hearken, all you that, by ſinning in the light, have ſinned yourſelves into infidelity, and do not believe the word of God. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the gracious and yet the dreadful call of God! His eye is all this while upon you. Your ſins are regiſtered, and you ſhall ſurely hear of them again. God keepeth the book now; and he will write it all upon your conſciences with his terrors; and then you alſo ſhall keep it yourſelves: O ſinners, that you knew but what you are doing! and whom you are all this while offending! the ſun itſelf is darkneſs before that Majeſty, which you daily abuſe and careleſsly provoke. The ſinning angels were not able to ſtand before him, but were caſt down to be tormented with devils. And dare ſuch ſilly worms as you ſo careleſsly offend, and ſet yourſelves againſt your Maker! O that you did but a little know what caſe that wretched ſoul is in, that hath engaged the living God againſt him! The word of his mouth, that made thee, can unmake thee; the frown of his face will cut thee off, and caſt thee out into utter darkneſs. How eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and uſe thee as their own! and then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be againſt thee, all things are againſt thee: this world is but thy priſon, for all thou ſo loveſt it; thou art but reſerved in it to the day of wrath, *Job* xxi. 30. The Judge is coming, thy ſoul is even going. Yet a little while, and thy friend ſhall ſay of thee, "He is dead;" and thou ſhalt ſee the things that thou now doſt deſpiſe, and feel that which now thou wilt not believe.

Death will bring ſuch an argument as thou canſt not anſwer; an argument that ſhall effectually confute thy cavils againſt the words and ways of God, and all thy ſelfconceited dotages. And then how ſoon will thy mind be changed? Then be an unbeliever if thou canſt; ſtand then to all thy former words, which thou waſt wont to utter againſt a holy and a heavenly life. Make good that cauſe then before the Lord, which thou waſt wont to plead againſt thy teachers, and againſt the people that feared God. Then ſtand to thy old opinions and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the ſaints; make ready now thy ſtrongeſt reaſons, and ſtand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man for thy fleſhly, thy worldly, and ungodly life. But know that thou wilt have One to plead with, that will not be outfaced by thee; nor ſo eaſily put off as we thy fellow creatures. O poor ſoul! there is nothing but a ſlender veil of fleſh between thee and that amazing ſight, which will quickly ſilence thee, and turn thy tone, and make thee of another mind! As ſoon as death hath drawn this curtain, thou ſhalt ſee that which will quickly leave thee ſpeechleſs. And how quickly will that day and hour come! When thou haſt had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleaſant draughts and morſels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be ſpent, and thy pleaſures ended, and all is then gone that thou ſetteſt thy heart upon; of all, that thou ſoldeſt thy Saviour and ſalvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief, that ſits merrily ſpending the money in an alehouſe which he hath ſtolen, when men are riding in poſthaſte to apprehend him, ſo it is with you. While you are drowned in cares or fleſhly pleaſures, and making merry with your own ſhame, death is coming in poſthaſte to ſeize upon you, and carry your ſouls to ſuch a place and ſtate as now you little known or think of. Suppoſe, when you were bold and buſy in your ſin, that a meſſenger were but coming poſt from London to apprehend you and

take away your lives; though you ſaw him not, yet if you knew that he was coming, it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haſte he makes, and hearkening when he knocked at your door. O that you could but ſee what haſte death makes, though yet he hath not overtaken you! no poſt ſo ſwift! no meſſenger more ſure! as ſure as the ſun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many thouſand and hundred thouſand miles to go in the night, ſo ſure will death be quickly with you; and then where is your ſport and pleaſure? Then will you jeſt and brave it out? Then will you jeer at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing ſaint or a ſenſual worldling? "And then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be" that you have gathered? *Luke* xii. 19, 20, 21. Do you not obſerve that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and ſpeedily ſucceed each other? You ſleep, "but your damnation ſlumbereth not," you linger, "but your judgment this long time lingereth not," 2 *Pet.* ii. 3, 4, 5, to which "you are reſerved for puniſhment," 2 *Pet.* ii. 8, 9. "O that you were wiſe to underſtand this, and that you did conſider your latter end," *Deut.* xxxii. 29. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the call of God in this day of his ſalvation."

O careleſs ſinners! that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciouſneſs of the blood of Chriſt which you deſpiſe! O that you did but know, the riches of the goſpel! O that you did but know, a little know, the certainty, and the glory, and bleſſedneſs, of that everlaſting life, which now you will not ſet your hearts upon, nor be perſuaded firſt and diligently to ſeek, *Heb.* xi. 6, and xii. 28. *Matth.* vi. 12. Did you but know the endleſs life with God which you now neglect, how quickly, would you caſt away your ſin, how quickly would you change your mind and life, your courſe and company, and turn the ſtreams of your affections, and lay your care another way! how reſolutely would you ſcorn to yield to ſuch

temptations as now deceive you and carry you away? How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life? How earnest would you be with God in prayer? How diligent in hearing, and learning, and inquiring? How serious in meditating on the laws of God? (*Psal.* i. 2.) How fearful of sinning in thought, word, or deed; and how careful to please God and grow in holiness? O what a changed people you would be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed by you, and prevail with you, which openeth to you these glorious and eternal things?

Yea, let me tell you, that even here on earth, ye little know the difference between the life which you refuse, and the life which you would choose? The sanctified are conversing with God, when you dare scarce think of him, and when you are conversing with but earth and flesh. Their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your God, and you are minding earthly things, *Phil.* iii. 18, 19, 20. They are seeking after the face of God, when you seek for nothing higher than this world. They are busily laying out for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels, *Luke* xx. 36, when you are taken up with a shadow and a transitory thing of naught. How long and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble, spiritual life of true believers! many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, and care, and labour, for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher things to mind. What difference is there between the lives of these men and of the beasts that perish, that spend their time in working, and eating, and living, but that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live upon. I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the forethoughts of their heavenly inheritance afford them, though I

had all their ſcorns and ſufferings with it, than to have all your pleaſures and treacherous proſperity. I would not have one of your ſecret gripes and pangs of conſcience, and dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you, or all that you can reaſonably hope that it ſhould do.

If I were in your unconverted carnal ſtate, and knew but what I know, and believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaſte of hell: How oft ſhould I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord, and of the diſmal day that is haſtening on! Sure death and hell would be ſtill before me. I ſhould think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I ſhould lie down in fear and riſe in fear, and live in fear, leſt death ſhould come before I were converted. I ſhould have ſmall felicity in any thing that I poſſeſſed, and little pleaſure in any company, and little joy in any thing in the world, as long as I knew myſelf to be under the curſe and wrath of God. I ſhould be ſtill afraid of hearing that voice, *Luke* xii. 20. "Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee." And that fearful ſentence would be written upon my conſcience, *Iſa.* xlviii. 22. and lvii. 21. "There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked." O poor ſinners! it is a joyfuller life than this that you might live, if you were but willing, but truly willing, to hearken to Chriſt, and come home to God. You might then draw near to God with boldneſs, and call him your father, and comfortably truſt him with your ſouls and bodies. If you look upon the promiſes, you may ſay, they are all mine: If upon the curſe, you may ſay, from this I am delivered! When you read the law, you may ſee what you are ſaved from! When you read the goſpel, you may ſee him that redeemed you, and ſee the courſe of his love, and holy life, and ſufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears, and blood, in the work of your ſalvation. You may ſee death conquered, and heaven opened, and your reſurrection and glorification provided for in the reſurrection

and glorification of your Lord. If you look on the ſaints, you may ſay, "They are my brethren and companions." If on the unſanctified, you may rejoice to think that you are ſaved from that ſtate. If you look upon the heavens, the ſun, and moon, and ſtars innumerable, you may think and ſay, "My father's face is infinitely more glorious; it is higher matters that he hath prepared for his ſaints; yonder is but the outward court of heaven: The bleſſedneſs that he hath promiſed us is ſo much higher that fleſh and blood cannot behold it." If you think of the grave, you may remember that the glorified ſpirit, a living head, and a loving father, have all ſo near a relation to your duſt, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected, but will more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the ſpring, becauſe that the ſoul is ſtill alive, that is the root of the body; and Chriſt is alive, that is the root of both. Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnants of ſin and ſorrow, and the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you ſhall ſee the bleſſed things which you had heard of, and ſhall find, by preſent joyful experience, what it was to chooſe the better part, and to be a ſincere believing ſaint. What ſay you, Sir, is not this a more delightful life, to be aſſured of ſalvation, and ready to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs and the cares of this life, and ſo that day comes upon them unawares? *Luke* xxi. 34, 36. Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and ſure to be ſaved when you leave the world? O look about you then, and think what you do, and caſt not away ſuch hopes as theſe for very nothing. The fleſh and world can give you no ſuch hopes or comforts.

And, beſides all the miſery that you bring upon yourſelves, you are the troublers of others as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magiſtrates to rule you by their laws; you trouble miniſters by re-

ſiſting the light and guidance which they offer you. Your ſin and miſery are the greateſt grief and trouble to them in the world. You trouble the common-wealth, and draw the judgments of God upon you. It is you that moſt diſturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the ſhame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of the places where you are. Ah! Lord, how heavy and ſad a caſe is this, that even in England, where the goſpel doth abound above any other nation in the world, where teaching is ſo plain and common, and all the helps we can deſire is at hand; when the ſword has been hewing us, and judgment has run as a fire through the land; when deliverences have relieved us, and ſo many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, and to the goſpel, and a holy life; that after all this our cities and towns, and countries, ſhall abound with multitudes of unſanctified men, and ſwarm with ſo much ſenſuality, as every where, to our grief, we ſee! One would have thought, that after all this light, and all this experience, and all theſe judgments and mercies of God, the people of this nation ſhould have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord, and ſhould have come to their godly teacher, and lamented all their former ſins, and deſired him to join with them in public humiliation, to confeſs them openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and ſhould have craved his inſtruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the ſpirit within, and the miniſters of Chriſt without, according to the word of God. One would think that, after ſuch reaſon and ſcripture evidence as they hear, and after all theſe means and mercies, there ſhould not be an ungodly perſon left amongſt us, nor a wordling, nor a drunkard, nor a hater of reformation, nor an enemy to holineſs, to be found in all our towns or countries. If we be not all agreed about ſome ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this, we ſhould have been all agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedi-

ence to God, his word, and miniſters, and in love and peace with one another. But alas! how far are our people from this courſe! Moſt of them, in moſt places, do ſet their hearts on earthly things, and ſeek "not firſt the kingdom of God and the righteouſneſs thereof," but look at holineſs as a needleſs thing: Their families are prayerleſs, or elſe a few heartleſs lifeleſs words muſt ſerve inſtead of hearty fervent daily prayers [or perhaps only on the Lord's day in the evening;] their children are not taught the knowledge of Chriſt, and the covenant of grace, nor brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they firmly promiſed all this in their baptiſm.

They inſtruct not their ſervants in the matters of ſalvation, but ſo their work be done they care not. There are more railing ſpeeches in their families than gracious words that tend to edification. How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire at his word and miniſters how they ſhould live, and what they ſhould do, and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlaſting life! And thoſe few that God hath made ſo happy are commonly the by word of their neighbours; when we ſee ſome live in drunkenneſs, and ſome in pride and worldlineſs, and moſt of them have little care of their ſalvation, though the cauſe be groſs and paſt all controverſy, yet will they hardly be convinced of their miſery, and more hardly recovered and reformed: but when we have done all that we are able to ſave them from their ſins, we leave the moſt of them as we find them. And if, according to the law of God, we caſt them out of the communion of the church, when they have obſtinately rejected all our admonitions, they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice againſt us, and they will ſooner ſet themſelves againſt the Lord and his laws, and church, and miniſters, than againſt their deadly ſins. This is the doleful caſe of England: We have magiſtrates that countenance the ways of godlineſs, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us, and

faithful miniſters long to ſee the right ordering of the church and of the ordinances of God; but the power of ſin in our people doth fruſtrate almoſt all. Nowhere can almoſt a faithful miniſter ſet up the unqueſtionable diſcipline of Chriſt, or put back the moſt ſcandalous impenitent ſinners from the communion of the church and participation of the ſacraments, but the moſt of the people rail at them and revile them; as if theſe ignorant careleſs ſouls were wiſer than their teachers, or than God himſelf. And thus in the day of our viſitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magiſtrates ſeem willing, and faithful miniſters ſeem willing, yet are the multitude of the people ſtill unwilling, and have ſo blinded themſelves, and hardened their hearts, that, even in theſe days of light and grace, they are the obſtinate enemies of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God to ſee their folly, and know what is for their good. O that the people of England "knew at leaſt in this their day the things that belong unto their peace, before they are hid from their eyes!" *Luke* xix. 42.

O fooliſh miſerable ſouls! *Gal.* iii. 1. who hath bewitched your minds into ſuch madneſs, and your hearts into ſuch deadneſs, that you ſhould be ſuch mortal enemies to yourſelves, and go on ſo obſtinately towards damnation, that neither the word of God, nor the perſuaſions of men, can change your minds, or hold your hands, or ſtop you, till you are paſt remedy! Well, ſinners! this life will not laſt always; this patience will not wait upon you ſtill. Do not think that you ſhall abuſe your Maker and Redeemer, and ſerve his enemies, and debaſe your ſouls, and trouble the world, and wrong the church, and reproach the godly, and grieve your teachers, and hinder reformation, and all this upon free coſt. You know not yet what this muſt coſt you, but you muſt ſhortly know, when the righteous God ſhall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the ſharpeſt magiſtrates or the plaineſt dealing paſtors did, unleſs you prevent the everlaſting

torments by a ſound converſion, and a ſpeedy obeying of the call of God. "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear," while mercy hath a voice to call.

One objection I find moſt common in the mouths of the ungodly, eſpecially of late years: they ſay, "We can do nothing without God, we cannot have grace if God will not give it us; and, if he will, we ſhall quickly turn; if he have not predeſtinated us, and will not turn us, how can we turn ourſelves or be ſaved; it is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs." And thus they think they are excuſed.

I have anſwered this formerly, and in this book: but let me now ſay this much. 1. Though you cannot cure yourſelves, you can hurt and poiſon yourſelves. It is God that muſt ſanctify your hearts; but who corrupted them? Will you wilfully take poiſon, becauſe you cannot cure yourſelves? Methinks you ſhould the more forbear it. You ſhould the more take heed of ſinning, if you cannot mend what ſin doth mar. 2. Though you cannot be converted without the ſpecial grace of God, yet you muſt know that God giveth his grace in the uſe of his holy means which he hath appointed to that end; and common grace may enable you to forbear your groſs ſinning (as to the outward act) and to uſe thoſe means. Can you truly ſay, that you do as much as you are able to do? Are you not able to go by an alehouſe door, or to forbear the company that hardeneth you in ſin? Are you not able to hear the word, and think of what you heard when you come home, and to conſider with yourſelves of your own condition and of everlaſting things? Are you not able to read good books from day to day, at leaſt on the Lord's day, and to converſe with thoſe that fear the Lord? You cannot ſay that you have done what you are able. 3. And therefore you muſt know that you can forfeit the grace and help of God by your wilful ſinning or negligence, though you cannot, without grace, turn to God. If you will not do what you can, it is juſt with God to deny you that grace by which you might do more. 4. And, for

God's decrees, you must know that they separate not the end and means, but tie them together. God never decreed to save any but the sanctified, nor to damn any but the unsanctified. God doth as truly decree whether your land, this year, shall be barren or fruitful, and just how long you shall live in the world, as he hath decreed whether you shall be saved or not; and yet you would think that man but a fool that would forbear ploughing and sowing, and say, "If God have decreed that my ground shall bear corn, it will bear, whether I plough and sow or not. If God have decreed that I shall live, I shall live, whether I eat or not; but if he have not, it is not eating that will keep me alive." Do you know how to answer such a man, or do you not? If you do, then you know how to answer yourselves; for the case is alike: God's decree is as peremptory about your bodies as your souls: If you do not, then try first these conclusions upon your bodies, before you venture to try them on your souls: see first whether God will keep you alive without food or raiment, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without your travail or carriage; and, if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use of means, and sit down and say, we cannot sanctify ourselves.

Well, Sirs, I have but three requests to you, and I have done.

First, That you will seriously read over this small Treatise; and, if you have such as need it in your families, that you would read it over and over to them; and if those that fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbours, and read this or some other book to them on this subject, they might be a means of winning of souls. If we cannot intreat so small a labour of men, for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these, they set little by themselves, and will most justly perish.

Secondly, When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone, and ponder a little

what you have read, and bethink you, as in the ſight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your ſouls, and whether it be not time to look about you. And alſo intreat you, that you will upon your knees beſeech the Lord that he will open your eyes to underſtand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that ſaving grace which you have ſo long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed. And withal, that you will go to your paſtors, that are ſet over you, to take care of the health and ſafety of your ſouls, as phyſicians do for the health of your bodies, and deſire them to direct you what courſe to take, and acquaint them with your ſpiritual eſtate, and that you may have the benefit of their advice and miniſterial help.

Or, if you have not a faithful paſtor at home, make uſe of ſome other in ſo great a need.

Thirdly, When by reading, conſideration, prayer, and miniſterial advice, you are once acquainted with your ſin and miſery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but preſently forſake your ſinful company and courſes, and turn to God, and obey his call. As you love your ſouls, take heed that you go not on againſt ſo loud a call of God, and againſt your own knowledge and conſciences, leſt it go worſe with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah. Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful cheater of his ſoul. Search the holy ſcriptures daily, and ſee whether theſe things be ſo or not; try impartially whether it be ſafer to truſt heaven or earth, and whether it be better to follow God or man, the ſpirit or the fleſh, and better to live in holineſs or ſin, and whether an unſanctified eſtate be ſafe for you to abide in one day longer; and, when you have found out which is beſt, reſolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own ſouls, and do not love everlaſting torments, I beſeech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reaſonable advice.

O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but perſuade our neighbours to agree to ſuch a neceſſary motion! What joyful men would all faithful miniſters be, if they could but ſee their people truly heavenly and holy; this would be the unity, the peace, the ſafety, the glory, of our churches; the happineſs of our neighbours, and the comfort of our ſouls. Then how comfortably ſhould we preach, pardon and peace to you, and deliver the ſacraments, which are the ſeals of peace to you! And with what love and joy might we live among you! At your death bed how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing ſouls! And at your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your ſouls in heaven, and to ſee your bodies raiſed to that glory!

But, if ſtill the moſt of you will go on in a careleſs, ignorant, fleſhly, worldly, or unholy life, and all our deſires and labours cannot ſo far prevail as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourſelves; we muſt then imitate our Lord, who delighteth himſelf in thoſe few that are jewels, and in the little flock that ſhall receive the kingdom, when the moſt ſhall reap the miſery which they ſowed. In nature excellent things are few. The world hath not many ſuns or moons: it is but a little of the earth that is gold or ſilver. Princes and nobles are but a ſmall part of the ſons of men; and it is no great number that are learned, judicious, or wiſe, here in the world. And therefore, if the gate being ſtrait and very narrow, there be but few that find ſalvation, yet God will have his glory and pleaſure in thoſe few. And when Chriſt ſhall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, his coming will be glorified in his ſaints, and admired in all true believers. 2. *Theſſ.* i. 7, 8, 9, 10.

And for the reſt, as God the Father vouchſafed to create them, and God the ſon diſdained not to

bear the penalty of their ſins upon the croſs, and did not judge ſuch ſufferings in vain, though he knew that by refuſing the ſanctifications of the Holy Ghoſt they would finally deſtroy themſelves, ſo we, that are his miniſters, though theſe be not gathered, judge not our labour wholly loſt. See *Iſa.* xlix. 5.

Reader, I have done with thee, (when thou haſt peruſed this book) but ſin hath not yet done with thee, even thoſe that thou thoughteſt had been forgotten long ago, and Satan hath not yet done with thee, (though now he be out of ſight) and God hath not yet done with thee, becauſe thou wilt not be perſuaded to have done with the deadly reigning ſin. I have written thee this perſuaſive as one that is going into another world, where the things are ſeen that I here ſpeak of, and as one that knoweth thou muſt be ſhortly there thyſelf. As ever thou wilt meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us; as ever thou wilt eſcape the everlaſting plagues prepared for the final neglectors of ſalvation; and for all that are not ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt, and love not the communion of the ſaints, as members of the holy catholic church; and as ever thou hopeſt to ſee the face of Chriſt the Judge, and of the majeſty of the Father, with peace and comfort, and to be received into glory when thou art turned naked out of this world; I beſeech thee, I charge thee, to hear and obey the Call of God, and reſolvedly to turn that thou mayeſt live. But, if thou wilt not, even when thou haſt no true reaſon for it but becauſe thou wilt not, I ſummon thee to anſwer it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witneſs that I gave thee warning, and that thou waſt not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but becauſe thou wouldeſt not believe it and obey it; which alſo muſt be the teſtimony of thy ſerious monitor,

RICHARD BAXTER.

Dec. 11, 1657.

A CALL
TO THE
UNCONVERTED.

SERMON I.

EZEK. xxxiii. 11.

SAY UNTO THEM, AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD GOD, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE. TURN YE, TURN YE, FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?

IT hath been the aſtoniſhing wonder of many a man, as well as me, to read, in the holy Scripture, how few will be ſaved; and that the greateſt part, even of thoſe that are called, will be everlaſtingly ſhut out of the kingdom of heaven, and be tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore muſt feel it. Thoſe that do believe it are forced to cry out, with Paul, *Rom.* xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!" but nature itſelf doth teach us all to lay the

blame of evil works upon the doers, and therefore, when we ſee any henious thing done, a principle of juſtice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of ſhame upon the author. If we ſaw a man killed and cut to pieces by the way, we ſhould preſently aſk, "O! who did this cruel deed?" If the town were wilfully ſet on fire, you would aſk, "what wicked wretch did this?" So, when we read that the moſt will be firebrands of hell for ever, we muſt needs think with ourſelves, how comes this to paſs? And who is it long of? Who is it that is ſo cruel as to be the cauſe of ſuch a thing as this? And we can meet with but few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confeſſed by all that Satan is the cauſe: but that doth not reſolve the doubt, becauſe he is not the principal cauſe. He doth not force men to ſin, but tempt them to it; and leaves it to their own wills whether they will do it or not: he doth not carry men to an alehouſe and force open their mouths, and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's ſervice; nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth therefore between God himſelf and the ſinner; one of them muſt needs be the principal cauſe of all this miſery, which ever it is; for there is no other to caſt it upon; and God diſclaimeth it; he will not take it upon him: and the wicked diſclaim it uſually, and

they

they will not take it upon them. And this is the controverſy that is here managed in my text.

The Lord complaineth of the people; and the people think it long of God. The ſame controverſy is handled, chap. xvii. ver. 25, where they plainly ſay, "that the way of the Lord is not equal:" and God ſaith, "it is their ways that are not equal." So here they ſay, ver. 9. "If our tranſgreſſions and our ſins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhall we then live?" As if they ſhould ſay, if we muſt die and be miſerable, how can we help it? As if it were not long of them, but God. But God in my text doth clear himſelf of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and perſuadeth them to uſe means; and, if they will not be perſuaded, he lets them know that it is long of themſelves; and, if this will not ſatisfy them he will not therefore forbear to puniſh them. It is he that will be their judge, and he will judge them according to their ways: they are no judges of him or themſelves, as wanting authority, and wiſdom, and impartiality. Nor is it their cavilling with God, that ſhall ſerve their turn, or ſave them from the execution of juſtice, which they murmur at.

The words of this verſe contain, 1. God's clearing of himſelf from the blame of their deſtruction. This he doth not by diſowning his law, that the wicked ſhall die, not by diſowning

owning his judgments and execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law ſhall not be executed; but by profeſſing that it is not their death that he takes pleaſure in, but their returning rather, that they may live: and this he confirmeth to them by his oath. 2. An expreſs exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God doth not only command, but perſuade, and condeſcend alſo to reaſon the caſe with them, why will they die? The direct end of his exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The ſecondary or reſerved ends, upon ſuppoſition that this is not attained, are theſe two: firſt, to convince them by the means which he uſed that it is not long of God if they be miſerable: Secondly, to convince them, from their manifeſt wilfulneſs in rejecting all his commands and perſuaſions, that it is long of themſelves; and they die becauſe they will die.

The ſubſtance of the text doth lie in theſe obſervations following:

Doct. 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men muſt turn or die.

Doct. 2. It is the promiſe of God, that the wicked ſhall live, if they will but turn.

Doct. 3. God taketh pleaſure in men's converſion and ſalvation; but not in their death or damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. 4. This is a moſt certain truth, which, becauſe God would not have men to queſt-

ion,

ion, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doct. 5. The Lord doth redouble his commands and perſuaſions to the wicked to turn.

Doct. 6. The Lord condeſcendeth to reaſon the caſe with them, and aſketh the wicked, why they will die.

Doct. 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not long of God that they periſh but of themſelves; their own wilfulneſs is the cauſe of their damnation; they therefore die, becauſe they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in theſe plain propoſitions, I ſhall next ſpeak ſomewhat of each of them in order, though briefly.

Doct. 1. *It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men muſt turn or die.*

If you will believe God, believe this: there is but one of theſe two ways for every wicked man, either converſion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be perſuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be againſt them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will ſave the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death; but denying and accuſing it will but haſten it. If

it were not ſo, a hundred would bring their reaſons againſt the law, for one that would bring his reaſon to the law. And men would rather give their reaſons, why they ſhould not be puniſhed, than to hear the commands and reaſons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it.

But, if there be any ſo blind as to venture to queſtion either the truth or the juſtice of this law of God, I ſhall briefly give you that evidence of both, which methinks ſhould ſatisfy a reaſonable man.

And firſt, if you doubt whether this be the word of God or not, beſides a hundred other texts, you may be ſatisfied by theſe few. *Mat.* xviii. 5. "Verily I ſay unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." *Joh.* iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." 2 *Cor.* v. 17. "If a man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſt away, behold, all things are become new." *Col.* iii. 9, 10. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." *Heb.* xii. 14. "Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God." *Rom.* viii. 8, 9. "So then they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God."

"Now

"Now if any man have not the ſpirit of Chriſt he is none of his." *Gal.* vi. 45. "For in Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature." 1 *Pet.* i. 3. "According to his abundant grace he hath begotten us again to a lively hope." *Verſe* 23. "Being born again not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 *Pet.* ii. 1, 2. "Wherefore, laying aſide all malice, and all guile, and hypocriſies, and envies, and evil ſpeaking: as new born babes deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." *Pſal.* ix. 17. "The wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." *Pſal.* xi. 5. "And the Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his ſoul hateth."

As I need not ſtay to open theſe texts, which are ſo plain, ſo I think I need not add any more of that multitude which ſpeak the like. If thou be a man that doſt believe the word of God, here is already enough to ſatisfy thee, that the wicked muſt be converted or condemned. You are already brought ſo far that you muſt either confeſs that this is true, or ſay plainly you will not believe the word of God. And, if once you be come to that paſs, there are but ſmall hopes of you: look to yourſelves as well as you can, for it is likely you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that ſhould

give

give you the lie ; and yet dare you give the lie to God ? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forſake you, and give you up as hopeleſs. For, to what purpoſe ſhould he warn you, if you will not believe him? Should he ſend an angel from heaven to you, it ſeems you would not believe. For an angel can ſpeak but the word of God ; and if an angel ſhould bring you any other goſpel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accuſed, *Gal.* i. 8. And ſurely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And, if you ſtand on theſe terms with God, I ſhall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear. Though he intreat you to hear the voice of his goſpel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning ſentence, without intreaty. We cannot make you believe againſt your will ; but God will make you feel againſt your will.

But let us hear what reaſon you have, why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked muſt be converted or condemned. I know your reaſon ; it is becauſe that you judge it unlikely that God ſhould be ſo unmerciful : you think it cruelty to damn men everlaſtingly for ſo ſmall a

thing

thing as a ſinful life. And this leads us to the ſecond thing, which is, to juſtify the equity of God in his laws and judgments.

And firſt, I think you will not deny but that it is moſt ſuitable to an immortal ſoul to be ruled by laws, that promiſe an eternal reward and threaten an endleſs puniſhment. Otherwiſe the law would not be ſuited to the nature of the ſubject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlaſting things: As it is in the caſe of temporal puniſhment; if a law were now made, that the moſt henious crimes ſhall be puniſhed with a hundred years captivity, this might be of ſome efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But, if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been ſufficient, becauſe men would know that they might have ſo many hundred years impunity afterwards. So it is in the preſent caſe.

2. I ſuppoſe you will confeſs, that the promiſe of an endleſs and inconceivable glory is not unſuitable to the wiſdom of God, or the caſe of man. And why then ſhould you not think ſo of the threatening of an endleſs and unſpeakable miſery!

3. When you find it in the word of God, that ſo it is, and ſo it will be, do you think yourſelves fit to contradict this word?—Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine

amine his word upon the accuſation of falſehood? Will you ſet upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiſer, and better, and righteouſer than he? Muſt the God of heaven come to you to learn wiſdom? Muſt infinite Wiſdom learn of folly? and infinite Holineſs be corrected by a ſwiniſh ſinner, that cannot keep himſelf an hour clean? Muſt the Almighty ſtand at the bar of a worm? Oh! horrid arrogance of ſenſeleſs duſt! Shall every mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuſe the ſun of darkneſs, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made theſe laws, that he did not call you to his council? Sure he made them before you were born, without deſiring your advice! and you came into the world too late to reverſe them. If you could have done ſo great a work, you ſhould have ſlipped out of your nothingneſs, and have contradicted Chriſt when he was on earth, or Moſes before him, or have ſaved Adam and his ſinful progeny from the threatened death, that ſo there might have been no need of Chriſt! And what if God withdrew his patience and ſuſtenation, and let you drop into hell while you are quarrelling with his word?—Will you then believe that there is no hell?

4. If ſin be ſuch an evil that it required the death of Chriſt for its expiation, no wonder if it deſerve our everlaſting miſery.

5. And

5. And if the ſin of the devils deſerved an endleſs torment, why not alſo the ſin of man?

6. And methinks you ſhould perceive, that it is not poſſible for the beſt of men, much leſs for the wicked, to be competent judges of the deſert of ſin. Alas! we are all both blind and partial. You can never know fully the deſert of ſin till you fully know the evil of ſin: and you can never fully know the evil of ſin, till you fully know, 1. The excellency of the ſoul, which it deformeth: 2. And the excellency of holineſs, which it doth obliterate: 3. And the reaſon and excellency of the glory, which it violateth: And 4, the excellency of the glory, which it doth deſpiſe: And, 5. the excellency and office of reaſon, which it treadeth down: 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightineſs, and holineſs, of that God, againſt whom it is committed. When you fully know all theſe, you ſhall fully know the deſert of ſin. Beſides, you know that the offender is too partial to judge the law or the proceedings of the judge. We judge by feeling, which blinds our reaſon. We ſee, in common worldly things, that moſt men think the cauſe is right which is their own; and that all is wrong that is done againſt them: and let the moſt wiſe, or juſt impartial friends perſuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father unmerciful, or dealeth hardly with them, if he whip

them. There is ſcarce the vileſt wretch, but thinketh the church doth wrong him, if they excommunicate him; nor ſcarce a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuſe the law and judge, of cruelty, if that would ſerve his turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy ſoul is fit for heaven? Alas! they cannot love God there, nor do him any ſervice which he can accept. They are contrary to God; they loath that which he moſt loveth; and love that which he abhorreth: they are incapable of that imperfect communion with him, which his ſaints do here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delight and communion with him, which is the bleſſedneſs of heaven? You do not accuſe yourſelves of unmercifulneſs, if you make not your enemy your boſom counſellor; and yet will you blame the abſolute Lord, the moſt wiſe and gracious Sovereign of the World, if he condemn the unconverted to perpetual miſery?

USE.

I beſeech you now, all that love your ſouls, that, inſtead of quarrelling with God, and with his word, you will preſently ſtoop to it, and uſe it for good. All you that are unconverted in this aſſembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God; you muſt ere long be converted or condemned; there is no other way, but turn or die. When God that

cannot

cannot lie hath told you this; when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the World, it is time for him that hath ears to hear. By this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie.—Should I hide this from you I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me: ver. 8. "When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man should die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand."—You see then, though this be a rough unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we should not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and to go the narrow way of holiness while they have time; and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in, and they are not awakened, because they are loath to hear or think of it, and that it is partly through foolish tenderness and carnal self love, and

partly becauſe they do not well believe the word that threateneth it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it ſhould force you to remember it; and it ſhould follow you, and give you no reſt, till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, "Thou muſt be converted or condemned; turn or die:" would it not ſtick in your mind, and haunt you night and day, ſo that in your ſinning you would remember it, as if the voice were ſtill in your ears, "turn or die!" O happy were your ſouls if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten or let you alone till it have driven home your hearts to God. But if you will caſt it out by forgetfulneſs or unbelief, how can it work to your converſion and ſalvation? But take this with you to your ſorrow, though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible; but there it will ſtand as a ſettled truth, which you ſhall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but *turn* or *die*.

O what is the matter then, that the hearts of ſinners be not pierced with ſuch a weighty truth! A man would think now, that every unconverted ſoul, that hears theſe words, ſhould be pricked to the heart, and think with themſelves, this is my own caſe, and never be quiet till they found themſelves converted.—Believe it Sirs, this drowſy careleſs temper

will

will not laſt long. Converſion and condemnation are both of them awakening things. I can foretel it as truly, as if I ſaw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will ſhortly bring theſe matters to the quick, and make you ſay, "What have I done? what a fooliſh wicked courſe have I taken? The ſcornful and ſtupid ſtate of ſinners will laſt but a little while. As ſoon as they either turn or die, the preſumptuous dream will be at an end; and then their wits and feeling will return.

But I foreſee there are two things that are like to harden the converted, and make me loſe all my labour, except they can be taken out of the way: and that is, the miſunderſtanding of theſe two words, [the wicked] and [turn.] Some will think with themſelves, it is true, the wicked muſt turn or die; but what is that to me? I am not wicked though I am a ſinner, as all men are. Others will think, "it is true that we muſt turn from our evil ways; but I am turned long ago: I hope this is not now to do." And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we loſe all our labour in perſuading them to turn. I ſhall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here who are meant by the wicked, and who they are that muſt turn or die; and alſo what is meant by turning, and who they are that are truly converted. And this I have purpoſely reſerved

ſerved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may obſerve, that, in the ſenſe of the text, a wicked man and a converted man, are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted, and no man is a converted man that is wicked; ſo that to be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man, is all one. And therefore in opening one we ſhould open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedneſs or converſion is, I muſt go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleaſed the great Creator of the world to make three ſorts of living creatures:—Angels he made pure ſpirits, without fleſh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Brutes were made fleſh, without immortal ſouls, and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven: Man is of a middle nature between both, as partaking of both fleſh and ſpirit, ſo he is made for earth, but as his paſſage or way to heaven, and not that this ſhould be his home or happineſs. The bleſſed ſtate that man was made for, was to behold the glorious majeſty of the Lord, and to praiſe him among his holy angels; and to love him, and to be filled with his love forever. And this was the end that man was made for, ſo God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. Theſe means were principally two;

Firſt,

Firſt, the right diſpoſition of the mind of man: Secondly, the right ordering of his life. For the firſt, God ſuited the diſpoſition of man unto the end; giving him ſuch knowledge of God as was fit for his preſent ſtate, and a heart inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition; but, having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free will. For the ſecond, God did that which belongeth to him: that is, he gave man a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlaſting life, but alſo turned his heart from God, and fixed it on theſe lower fleſhly things, and hereby did blot out our ſpiritual image of God from the ſoul: ſo that man did both fall ſhort of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himſelf out of the way by which he ſhould have attained it; and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination, and love of his ſoul to God, he loſt, and inſtead of it, he contracted an inclination and love to the pleaſing of his fleſh, or carnal ſelf, by earthly things, growing ſtrange to God, and acquainted with the creature: and the courſe of his life was ſuited to the inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal ſelf, and not to God, he fought the creature for the pleaſing of his fleſh, inſtead of ſeeking to

pleaſe the Lord. With this nature, or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" *Job* xiv. 4. As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature before it doth devour; and as an adder hath a venomous nature before ſhe ſting; ſo in our infancy we have thoſe ſinful natures, or inclinations, before we think, or ſpeak, or do amiſs: and hence ſpringeth all the ſin of our lives. And not only ſo, but when God hath of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jeſus Chriſt to be the Saviour of our ſouls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our preſent ſtate, and are loath to be brought out of it, and therefore are ſet againſt the means of our recovery. And, though cuſtom hath taught us to thank Chriſt for his good will, yet carnal ſelf perſuadeth us to refuſe his remedies, and to deſire to be excuſed when we are commanded to take the medicines he offereth, and are called to forſake all and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it: for, in theſe few words, you have a true deſcription of our natural ſtate, and conſequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this ſtate of corrupted nature is a wicked man, and in a ſtate of death.

By this alſo you are prepared to underſtand what it is to be converted; to which end you muſt further know, that the mercy of God,

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not willing that man ſhould periſh in his ſin provided a remedy, by cauſing his Son to take our nature, and being in one perſon God and man, to become a mediator between God and man; and, by dying for our ſins on the croſs, to ranſom us from the curſe of God and the power of the devil: and, having thus redeemed us, the Father has delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man: not like the firſt, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every ſin; but Chriſt hath made a law of grace, or a promiſe of pardon and everlaſting life to all, that, by true repentance and by faith in Chriſt, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down their arms and come in, and be loyal ſubjects for the time to come.

But, becauſe the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown ſo wicked, that for all this, men will not accept of the remedy, if they be left to themſelves; therefore the Holy Ghoſt hath undertaken it as his office, to inſpire the apoſtles, and ſeal up the ſcripture by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the ſons of the elect.

So that by this much you ſee, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, have each their ſeveral works, which are eminently aſcribed to them.

The

The Father's works were to create us, to rule us as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby, and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer, when we were loſt, and to ſend his Son, and accept of his ranſom.

The works of the Son for us were theſe; to ranſom and redeem us by his ſufferings and righteouſneſs, to give out the promiſe or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their redeemer, on terms of grace, and to make interceſſion for us, that the benefit of his death may be communicated; and to ſend the Holy Ghoſt; which the Father alſo doth by the Son. The works of the Holy Ghoſt for us are theſe; to indite the holy ſcriptures, by inſpiring and guiding the prophets and apoſtles, and ſealing the word by his miraculous gifts and works; and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary miniſters of the goſpel, and ſo enabling them and helping them to publiſh that word; and, by the ſame word, illuminating and converting the ſouls of men. So that, as you could not have been reaſonable creatures if the Father had not created you; nor have had any acceſs to God if the Son had not redeemed you; ſo neither can you have a part in Chriſt, or be ſaved except the Holy Ghoſt do ſanctify you.

So that by this time you may ſee the ſeveral cauſes of this work:—The Father ſendeth his Son; the Son redeemeth us, and maketh

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the promiſe of grace; the Holy Ghoſt inditeth and ſealeth this goſpel; the apoſtles are the ſecretaries of the ſpirit to write it; the preachers of the goſpel to proclaim it, and perſuade men to obey it; and the Holy Ghoſt doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it; and all this to repair the image of God upon the ſoul, and to ſet the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature and carnal ſelf to which it is revolted, and ſo turn the current of the life into a heavenly courſe, which before was earthly, and all this by the entertainment of Chriſt by Faith, who is the phyſician of the ſoul. By this which I have ſaid, you may ſee what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be converted; which I think will be yet plainer to you, if I deſcribe them as conſiſting of their ſeveral parts; and, for the firſt, a wicked man may be known by theſe three things.

Firſt, he is one that placeth his chief content on earth, and loveth the creature more than God, and his fleſhly proſperity above the heavenly felicity: He ſavoureth the things of the fleſh, but neither diſcerneth nor ſavoureth the things of the ſpirit:—Though he will ſay, that heaven is better than earth, yet doth he not really ſo eſteem it to himſelf; if he might be ſure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather ſtay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holineſs, in the ſight of God, and in his love and praiſe for

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ever in heaven, doth not find ſuch liking, with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honour, here upon earth. And, though he falſely profeſs that he loveth God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more ſet on the world, or fleſhly pleaſures, than on God. In a word, whoſoever loveth earth above heaven, and fleſhly proſperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other ſide, a converted man is illuminated to diſcern the lovelineſs of God; and ſo far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up to it, and ſet more upon it, than any thing in this world. He had rather ſee the face of God, and live in his everlaſting love and praiſes, than have all the wealth or pleaſures of the world; he ſeeth that all things elſe are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the ſoul, and therefore, let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treaſures and hopes in heaven, and for that he reſolves to let go all. As the fire doth mount upwards, and the needle that is touched with the loadſtone ſtill turneth to the north, ſo the converted ſoul is inclined to God. Nothing elſe can ſatisfy him, nor can he find any content and reſt but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do eſteem and love God better than the world; and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleſhly proſperity. The proof of what I have

ſaid

ſaid you may find in theſe places of ſcripture: *Phil.* iii. 18, 21. *Matt.* vi. 19, 20, 21. *Col.* iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. *Rom.* viii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 23, *Pſal.* lxxiii. 25, 36.

Secondly, a wicked man is one that maketh it the principal buſineſs of his life to proſper in the world, and attain his fleſhly end. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear diſgraceful ſins, yet this is all but upon the by, and he never makes it the trade and principal buſineſs of his life to pleaſe God and attain everlaſting glory, but puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more ſervice than the fleſh can ſpare; for he will not part with all for heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and buſineſs of his life to pleaſe God, and to be ſaved, and takes all the bleſſings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and uſeth the creature in ſubordination unto God: he loveth a holy life, and longeth to be more holy: he hath no ſin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and ſtriveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life are for God; and, if he ſin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life, and therefore he riſes again, and lamenteth it, and dares not wilfully live in any known ſin. There is nothing in this world ſo dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forſake it for him,

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and the hopes of glory. All this you may see in *Col.* iii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *Matt.* vi. 20, 33. *Luke* xviii. 22, 23, 29. *Luke* xiv. 18, 24, 26, 27. *Rom.* viii. 13. *Gal.* v. 24. *Luke* xii. 21, *&c.*

Thirdly, the soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour; nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as a physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigneth up his soul to Christ and to the motion and conduct of his word and spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul, having felt himself undone by sin, and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God, and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption, and, believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigneth up himself to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; he taketh Christ as the life of his soul, and liveth by him, and useth him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth

even

even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now liveth is by the faith of the Son of God, that he hath loved him, and gave himſelf for him; yea it is not ſo much he that liveth as Chriſt in him. For theſe, ſee *Job* i. 11, 12, and iii. 20. *John* xv. 2, 3, 4. 1 *Cor.* i. 20, and ii. 2.

You ſee now in plain terms, from the word of God, who are the wicked, and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no ſwearer, nor curſer, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church, and ſay their prayers, receive the ſacrament, and ſometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, theſe cannot be unconverted men. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenneſs, or ſwearing, or gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man. Others think, if a man, that hath been an enemy and ſcorner at godlineſs, do but approve it, and join himſelf with thoſe that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this muſt needs be a converted man. And ſome are ſo fooliſh as to think they are converted by taking up ſome new opinion. And ſome think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had conviction and tortures of conſcience, and thereupon have propoſed and promiſed amendment, and taken up a life of civil be-

haviour and outward religion, that this muſt needs be true converſion. And theſe are the poor deluded ſouls that are like to loſe the benefit of all our perſuaſions; and, when they hear that the wicked muſt turn or die, they think that this is not ſpoken to them; for they are not wicked, but are turned already. And therefore it is that Chriſt told ſome of the rulers of the Jews, who were graver and civiler than the common people, that "publicans and harlots do go into the kingdom of God before them," *Matt.* xxi. 31. Not that a harlot or groſs ſinner can be ſaved without converſion, but becauſe it was eaſier to make theſe groſs ſinners perceive their ſin and miſery, and the neceſſity of a change, when the civiler ſort delude themſelves by thinking that they are converted already, when they are not.

O Sirs, converſion is another kind of work than moſt are aware of: it is not a ſmall matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to ſhew man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up in ſuch love to him, that never can be quenched; to break the heart for ſin, and make him fly for refuge unto Chriſt, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his ſoul; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life to be changed, ſo that a man renounceth that which he took for felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before, and liveth not to the ſame end, and

driveth

driveth not on the ſame deſign in the world, as formerly he did: in a word, he that is in Chriſt is a new creature; "old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new," 2 *Cor.* v. 17. He hath a new underſtanding, a new will and reſolution, new ſorrows, and deſires, and love, and delight: new thoughts, new ſpeeches, new company, (if poſſible) and new converſation. Sin, that was before a jeſting matter with him, is now ſo odious and terrible to him, that he flies from it as from death. The world that was ſo lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation: God, that was before neglected, is now the only happineſs of his ſoul; before, he was forgotten, and every luſt preferred before him: but now he is ſet next the heart, and all things muſt give place to him, and the heart is taken up in the attendance and obſervance of him, and is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itſelf well without him. Chriſt himſelf, that was wont to be ſlightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he liveth upon him as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor ſpeak, nor live without him. Heaven itſelf, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reſerve which he hoped might ſerve his turn better than hell, when he could not ſtay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and reſt, where he ſhall ſee, and

love,

love, and praiſe that God that hath his heart already. Hell, that before did ſeem but as a bugbear to frighten men from ſin, doth now appear to be a real miſery, that is not to be ventured on, nor jeſted with. The works of holineſs, which before he was weary of, and ſeemed to be more ado than needs, are now both his recreation and his buſineſs, and the trade that he lives upon. The Bible, which was before to him but almoſt as a common book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from heaven, and ſubſcribed with the name of the eternal Majeſty; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promiſes of it ſpeak life to his ſoul. The godly, that ſeemed to him but like other men, are now the excellenteſt and happieſt on earth. And the wicked, that were his play fellows, are now his grief; and he, that could laugh at their ſins, is readier now to weep for their ſin and miſery, *Pſal.* xvi. 3. and xv. 4. *Phil.* iii. 18. In ſhort, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal ſelf was his end; and his pleaſure and worldly profits, and credit were his way; and now God and everlaſting glory are his end; and Chriſt, and the ſpirit, and word, and ordinances, holineſs to God, and righteouſneſs, and mercy to men, theſe are his way. Before, ſelf was the chief-

eſt

eſt ruler; to which the matters of God and conſcience muſt ſtoop and give place. And now God in Chriſt, by the ſpirit, word, and miniſtry, is that chief ruler, to whom both ſelf and all the matters of ſelf muſt give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole ſoul, and the very end and bent of the converſation. A man may ſtep out of one path into another, and yet have his face the ſame way, and be ſtill going towards the ſame place: But it is another matter to turn quite back again, and take his journey the contrary way to a contrary place. So it is here: A man may turn from darkneſs to thriftineſs, and forſake his good fellowſhip, and other groſs diſgraceful ſins, and ſet upon ſome duties of religion, and yet be going ſtill to the ſame end as before, intending his carnal ſelf above all, and giving it ſtill the government of his ſoul. But when he is converted, this ſelf is denied and taken down, and God is ſet up, and his face is turned the contrary way: and he, that before was addicted to himſelf, and lived to himſelf, is now by ſanctification devoted to God, and liveth unto God. Before, he aſked himſelf what he ſhould do with his time, his parts, and his eſtate, and for himſelf he uſed them; but now he aſketh God what he ſhall do with them, and he uſeth them for him. Before, he would pleaſe God ſo far as might ſtand with the pleaſure of his fleſh and carnal ſelf,

but not to any great diſpleaſure of them. But now, he will pleaſe God, let fleſh and ſelf be ever ſo much diſpleaſed. This is the great change that God will make upon all that ſhall be ſaved.

You can ſay, that the Holy Ghoſt is your ſanctifier, but do you know what ſanctification is? Why, this is that I have now opened to you; and every man and woman in the world muſt have this, or be condemned to everlaſting miſery. They muſt turn or die.

Do you believe all this or not? Surely you dare not ſay, you do not; for it is paſt doubt or denial. Theſe are not controverſies, where one learned pious man is of one mind, and another of another; where one party faith this, and another faith that; every denomination among us that deſerve to be called Chriſtians are all agreed in this that I have ſaid; and, if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a caſe where every party do believe him, you are utterly inexcuſable.

But, if you do believe this, how comes it to paſs that you live ſo quietly in an unconverted ſtate? Do you know that you are converted? And can you find this wonderful change upon your ſouls? Have you been thus born again and made anew? Are not theſe ſtrange matters to many of you? and ſuch as you never felt upon yourſelves? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very ſermon that converted you, yet, do you find

that

that the work is done? and ſuch a change indeed there is, and that you have ſuch hearts as before deſcribed? Alas! the moſt do follow their worldly buſineſs, and little trouble their minds with ſuch thoughts: and, if they be but reſtrained from ſcandalous ſins, and can ſay, "I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curſer, nor ſwearer, nor tipler, nor extortioner; I go to church and ſay my prayers;" they think that this is true converſion, and they ſhall be ſaved as well as any. Alas, this is fooliſh cheating of yourſelves; this is too much contempt of an endleſs glory, and too groſs neglect of your immortal ſouls. Can you make ſo light of heaven and hell? Your corpſes will ſhortly all lie in duſt, and angels or devils will preſently ſeize upon your ſouls, and every man and woman of you all will ſhortly be among other company, and in another caſe than now you are; you will dwell in thoſe houſes but a little longer, you will work in your ſhops but a little longer; you will ſit in theſe ſeats, and dwell on this earth, but a little longer; you will ſee with thoſe eyes, and hear with thoſe ears, and ſpeak with thoſe tongues, but a little longer; till the reſurrection day: and can you make ſhift to forget this? O what a place will you be ſhortly in of joy or torment! O what a ſight will you ſhortly ſee in heaven or hell! O what thoughts will ſhortly fill your hearts with unſpeakable delight or horror! What work will you be

employed

employed in ; to praiſe the Lord with ſaints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils ! And ſhould all this be forgotten ? And all this will be endleſs, and ſealed up by an unchangeable decree ; ETERNITY, ETERNITY, will be the meaſure of your joys or ſorrows : And can this be forgotten ? And all this is true, moſt certainly true. When you have gone up and down a little longer, and ſlept and awaked a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that I now tell you. And yet can you now ſo much forget it ! You ſhall then remember that you heard this ſermon, and that this day, from this place, you were reminded of theſe things ; and perceive them matters a thouſand times greater than either you or I could have conceived : and yet ſhall they now be ſo much forgotten ?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart theſe things myſelf, I ſhould have remained in the dark and ſelfiſh ſtate, and have periſhed forever ; but, if he have truly made me ſenſible of them, it will conſtrain me to compaſſionate you as well as myſelf. If your eyes were ſo far open as to ſee hell, and you ſaw your neighbours, that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries, though they were ſuch as you accounted honeſt people on earth, and feared no ſuch matter by themſelves, ſuch a ſight would make you go home and think of it ;

and

and think again, and make you warn all about you as that damned worldling in *Luke* xvi. 28. would have had his brethren warned, leſt they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of ſight; it is the eye of the ſoul, the evidence of things not ſeen. If I believe God, it is next to ſeeing; and therefore I beſeech you excuſe me, if I be half as earneſt with you about theſe matters as if I had ſeen them. If I muſt die tomorrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had ſeen, would you not be willing to hear me? and would you not believe and regard what I ſhould tell you? If I might preach one ſermon to you after I am dead, and have ſeen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly ſpeak the truth, and would you not crowd to hear me? and would you not lay it to heart? But this muſt not be; God hath his appointed way of teaching you by ſcripture and miniſters, and he will not humour unbelievers ſo far as to ſend men from the dead to them, and to alter his eſtabliſhed way. If any man quarrel with the ſun, God will not humour him ſo far as to ſet him up a clearer light. Friends, I beſeech you, regard me now as you would do if I ſhould come from the dead to you; for, I can give you as full aſſurance of the truth of what I ſay to you as if I had been there and ſeen it with my eyes: For, it is poſſible for one from the dead to deceive you; but Jeſus

Chriſt

Chriſt can never deceive you. The word of God, delivered in ſcripture, and ſealed by the miracles and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the ſalvation of your ſouls, let me beg of you this reaſonable requeſt; and I beſeech you deny me not: that you would, without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earneſt ſearch of your hearts, and ſay to yourſelves, "Is it ſo indeed? Muſt I turn or die? Muſt I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me, before it be too late. O why did not I look after this till now? Why did I venturouſly poſt off ſo great a buſineſs? Was I awake or in my wits? O bleſſed God, what a mercy is it that thou didſt not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life!—Well, God forbid that I ſhould neglect this work any longer. What ſtate is my ſoul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever ſuch a change or work done upon my ſoul? Have I been illuminated by the word and ſpirit of the Lord, to ſee the odiouſneſs of ſin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Chriſt, and the excellencies of God and glory? Is my heart broken or humbled within me for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord,

that

that offered himſelf with pardon and life to my ſoul? Do I hate my former ſinful life, and the remnant of every ſin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myſelf to a life of holineſs and obedience to God? Do I love and delight in it? Can I truly ſay that I am dead to the world and carnal ſelf, and that I live for God, and the glory which he hath promiſed? Hath heaven more of my eſtimation and reſolution than earth? and is God the deareſt and higheſt in my ſoul? Once, I am ſure, I lived principally to the world and fleſh, and God had nothing but ſome heartleſs ſervices which the world could ſpare, and which were the leavings of the fleſh. Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new deſign, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I ſet my hopes and heart in heaven? And is it now the ſcope, and deſign, and bent of my heart and life, to get well to heaven, and ſee the glorious face of God, and live in his everlaſting love and praiſe? And, when I ſin, is it againſt the habitual bent and deſign of my heart? And do I conquer all groſs ſins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of mine infirmities? This is the ſtate of a converted ſoul, and thus it muſt be with me, or I muſt periſh. Is it thus indeed with me, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt reſolved, before the dreadful judge reſolve it. I am not ſuch a ſtranger to my own heart and life, but I may

ſomewhat

ſomewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my ſoul with falſe conceits and hopes. I am reſolved no more to deceive myſelf, but to endeavour to know truly, off or on, whether I be converted, yea or no: that, if I be, I may rejoice in it; and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: And if I am not, I may ſet myſelf to beg, and ſeek after the grace that ſhould convert me, and may turn without any more delay: For, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Chriſt I may turn and be recovered; but, if I ſtay till either my heart be forſaken of God, in blindneſs and hardneſs, or till I be caught away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and converſion then: I know it muſt be now or never.

Sirs, this is my requeſt to you, that you will but take your hearts to taſk and thus examine them, till you ſee, if it may be, whether you are converted or not; and if you cannot find it out by your own endevours, go to your miniſters, if they be faithful and experienced men, and deſire their aſſiſtance. The matter is great, let not baſhfulneſs nor careleſsneſs hinder you. They are ſet over you to adviſe you, for the ſaving of your ſouls, as phyſicians adviſe you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thouſands, that they think they are in the way of ſalvation when they are not; and thinking that they are converted,

when

when it is no ſuch thing. And then, when we call to them to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope that they ſhould do well enough in the way that they are in; at leaſt if they do but pick the faireſt path, and avoid ſome of the fouleſt ſteps; when, alas! all this while they live but to the world and fleſh, and are ſtrangers to God and eternal life, and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this is much, becauſe we cannot perſuade them to a few ſerious thoughts of their condition, and ſpend a few hours in the examining of their ſtates. Is there not many a ſelf deceiving wretch that hears me this day, that never beſtowed one hour in all their lives to examine their ſouls, and try whether they are truly converted or not?—O merciful God, that will care for ſuch wretches as care no more for themſelves, and that will do ſo much to ſave them from hell, and help them to heaven, who will do ſo little for it themſelves! If all that are in the way to hell did but know it, they durſt not continue in it. The greateſt hope that the devil hath of bringing you to damnation without a reſcue, is by keeping you blindfold and ignorant of your ſtate, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you are out of the way to heaven, and were loſt for ever if

you ſhould die as you are? durſt you ſleep another night in the ſtate that you are in; durſt you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh or be merry in ſuch a ſtate? What! and not know but you may be ſnatched away to hell in an hour! Sure it would conſtrain you to forſake your former company and courſes, and to betake yourſelves to the ways of holineſs, and the communion of ſaints: Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to ſeek help of thoſe that are fit to counſel you. There is none of you ſure that cares not for being damned. Well then, I beſeech you, preſently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no reſt, till you find out your condition; that, if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and, if it be bad, you may preſently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they muſt turn or die. What ſay you, Sirs? Will you reſolve, and promiſe, and be at thus much labour for your own ſouls? Will you fall upon this ſelf examination when you get home? Is my requeſt unreaſonable? Your conſciences know it is not. Reſolve on it, then, before you ſtir, knowing how much it concerneth your ſouls. I beſeech you, for the ſake of that God that doth command you, at whoſe bar you will ſhortly all appear, that you will not deny me this reaſonable requeſt; for the ſake of thoſe ſouls that muſt turn or die, I beſeech you deny

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me not; even but to make it your buſineſs to underſtand your own conditions, and build upon ſure ground, and know, off or on, whether you are converted or not, and venture not your ſouls on negligent ſecurity.

SERMON II.

EZEK. xxxiii. 11.

SAY UNTO THEM, AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD GOD, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE. TURN YE, TURN YE, FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?

A TRUE diſcription of thoſe who are in a converted ſtate has already been given you; the change which converſion makes in the ſoul has alſo been deſcribed; and the requeſt is moſt earneſtly repeated to you, impartially and thoroughly to conſider your condition. Reſt not ſatisfied, till you know whether you are indeed converted.

But perhaps you will ſay, what if we ſhould find ourſelves yet unconverted, what ſhall we do then? This queſtion leadeth me to my ſecond doctrine, which will do much to the anſwering of it, to which I ſhall now proceed,

Doct.

Doct. 2. *It is the promiſe of God, that the wicked ſhall live, if they will turn; unfeignedly and thoroughly turn.*

The Lord here profeſſeth that this it is that he takes pleaſure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as ſure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live is as certain a truth as turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us a door of hope, nor call us to repent and turn, when once we had caſt ourſelves away by ſin, but he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you ſhall have cauſe to go home and ſay I preach deſpair to you. Do we uſe to ſhut up the door of mercy againſt you? O that you would not ſhut it up againſt yourſelves! Do we uſe to tell you, that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be ſanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher ſay ſuch a word? You, that bark at preachers of the goſpel, for deſiring to keep you out of hell, and ſay that they preach deſpair, tell me, if you can, when did you ever hear any ſober man ſay, that there is no hope for you though you repent and be converted? No, it is the contrary that we proclaim from the Lord; and, whoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, ſhall certainly be ſaved: and ſo far are we from perſuading you to deſpair of this, that we perſuade you not to make any doubt

of

of it. It is life, and not death, that is the firſt part of our meſſage to you, our commiſſion is to offer ſalvation, certain ſalvation; a ſpeedy, glorious, everlaſting ſalvation, to every one of you; to the pooreſt beggar as well as to the greateſt Lord; to the worſt of you, even drunkards, ſwearers, worldlings, thieves, yea to the deſpiſers and reproachers of the holy way of ſalvation. We are commanded by the Lord our maſter to offer you a pardon for all that is paſt, if you will but now at laſt return and live: We are commanded to beſeech and intreat you, to accept the offer and return; to tell you what preparations are made by Chriſt, what mercy ſtays for you, what patience waiteth on you, what thoughts of kindneſs God hath towards you, and how happy, how certainly and unſpeakably happy, you may be if you will.—We have indeed alſo a meſſage of wrath and death, yea, of a twofold wrath and death; but neither of them is our principal meſſage; we muſt tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works; but this is but to ſhew you the need of mercy, and provoke you to eſteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you muſt know: for, who will ſeek out for phyſic, that knows not that he is ſick? Our telling you of your miſery is not it that makes you miſerable, but driveth you out to ſeek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death

upon yourſelves. We tell you alſo of another death; even remedileſs and much greater torment, that will fall on thoſe that will not be converted. But, as this is true, and muſt be told you, ſo it is but the laſt and ſaddeſt part of our meſſage. We are firſt to offer you mercy if you will turn; and it is only thoſe that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, that we muſt foretel damnation to. Will you but caſt away your tranſgreſſions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Chriſt, and be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to ſpeak againſt you.—I do here, in the name of the Lord of life, proclaim to you, all that hear me this day, to the greateſt, the oldeſt ſinner, that you may have mercy and ſalvation if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is ſufficiency in the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, the promiſe is free, and full, and univerſal; you may have life, if you will but turn. But then, as you love your ſouls, remember what turning it is the ſcripture ſpeaks of. It is not to mend the old houſe, but to pull down all, and build a new on Chriſt, the rock and ſure foundation. It is not to mend ſomewhat in a carnal courſe of life, but to mortify the fleſh, and live after the ſpirit. It is not to ſerve the fleſh and the world in a more reformed way, without any ſcandalous diſgraceful ſins, and with a certain kind of religiouſneſs; but it is

to

to change your maſter, and your works, and end, and ſet your face the contrary way, and do all for the life that you never ſaw, and dedicate yourſelves and all you have to God. This is the change that muſt be made, if you will live.

Yourſelves are witneſſes now, that it is ſalvation, and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the firſt part of my meſſage to you. Accept of this, and we ſhall go no farther with you; for we would not ſo much as affright or trouble you with the name of damnation without neceſſity. But if you will not be ſaved, there is no remedy, but damnation muſt take place; for there is no middle place between the two, you muſt have either life or death. And we are not only to offer you life, but to ſhew you the grounds on which we do it; and call you to believe that God doth mean indeed as he ſpeaks: that the promiſe is true, and extendeth conditionally to you, as well as others: and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you aſk, where is your commiſſion for this offer? Among a hundred texts of ſcripture, I will ſhew it to you in theſe few.

Firſt, you ſee it here in my text, and the following verſes, and the 18th of *Ezekiel*, as plain as can be ſpoken. And, in 2 *Cor.* v. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, you have the very ſum of our commiſſion. "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away,

behold

behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt, and hath given to us the miniſtry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes to them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation: now then we are embaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us, we pray you, in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled unto God; for, he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him." So *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye unto all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature. He that believeth, (that is with ſuch a converting faith as is expreſſed) and is baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved: and he that believeth not ſhall be damned." And *Luke* xxiv. 46, 47. "Thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, and that repentance, (which is converſion) and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations." And *Acts* v. 30, 31. "The God of our fathers raiſed up Jeſus, whom he ſlew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a ſaviour, to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins." And *Acts* xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this name is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of

ſins;

ſins ; and, by him, all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which you could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes." And, leſt you think this offer is reſtrained to the Jews, ſee *Gal.* vi. 15. For in Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature." And *Luke* xiv. 17. "Come, for all things are now ready." and ver. 23, 24.

You ſee by this time that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you, from God, that, if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may ſafely truſt your ſouls, for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, *John* iii. 16. And the blood of the Son of God hath purchaſed it : The faithfulneſs and truth of God are engaged to make the promiſe good ; miracles have ſealed up the truth of it ; preachers are ſent through the world to proclaim it ; the ſacraments are inſtituted and uſed for the ſolemn delivery of the mercy offered to them that will accept it ; and the ſpirit doth open the heart to entertain it ; and is itſelf the earneſt of the full poſſeſſion : So that the truth of it is paſt controverſy, that the worſt of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be ſaved.

Indeed, if you will needs believe that you ſhall be ſaved without converſion, then you believe a falſhood ; and, if I ſhould preach that to you, I ſhould preach a lie : This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own

deceitful

deceitful hearts.—God hath his promiſe of life, and the devil hath his promiſe of life: God's promiſe is, "return and live:" The devil's promiſe is, "you ſhall live, whether you turn or not."—The word of God is, as I have ſhewn you, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," *Matt.* xviii. 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," *John* iii. 3, 5. "Without holineſs none ſhall ſee God," *Heb.* xii. 14.—The devil's word is, "you may be ſaved without being born again and converted: you may do well enough without being holy; God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful than to do as he ſaith; he will be better to you than his word."—And, alas! the greateſt part of the world believes this word of the devil before the word of God: juſt as our ſin and miſery came into the world. God ſaith to our firſt parents, "if ye eat ye ſhall die:" And the devil contradicted him and ſaid, "Ye ſhall not die:" And the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord ſaith, "turn or die:" And the devil ſaith, "You ſhall not die, if you do but cry, God have mercy, at laſt, and give over the acts of ſin when you can practiſe it no longer." And this is the word that the world believes.—Oh heinous wickedneſs, to believe the devil before God.

And

And yet that is not the worſt; but blaſphemouſly they call this a believing and truſting God, when they put him in the ſhape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning. And, when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a truſting God, and ſay they belive in him, and truſt on him for ſalvation. Where did ever God ſay, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unſanctified, ſhall be ſaved? Shew ſuch a word in ſcripture. I challenge you, if you can. Why this is the devils word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and the ſin that is commonly called preſumption.

And do you call this a believing and truſting God? There is every thing in the word of God to comfort and ſtrengthen the hearts of the ſanctified: but not a word to ſtrengthen the hands of wickedneſs, nor to give men the leaſt hope of being ſaved, though they be never ſanctified.

But, if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the lord is ready to entertain you. Then truſt God for ſalvation boldly; for, he is engaged by his word to ſave you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will ſave none but thoſe that forſake the world, the devil, and the fleſh, and come into his family to be members of his Son and have communion with his ſaints. But, if they will not come in, it is long of themſelves. His doors are open, he keeps none back. He never ſent ſuch a meſ-

ſage

ſage as this to any of you : " It was now too late : I will not receive thee though thou be converted.—He might have done ſo, and done you no wrong : But he did not ; he doth not to this day : He is ſtill ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fulneſs of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I ſhall therefore next proceed to, before I make any farther application of this.

Doct. 3. *God taketh pleaſure in men's converſion and ſalvation, but not in their death or damnation: He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die.*

I ſhall firſt teach you how to underſtand this, and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And, for the firſt, you muſt obſerve theſe following things.

1. A ſimple willingneſs, or complacency, is the firſt act of the will following the ſimple apprehenſion of the underſtanding, before it proceedeth to compare things together. But the chooſing act of the will is a following act, and ſuppoſeth the comparing practical act of the underſtanding. And theſe two acts may often be carried to contrary objects without any fault at all in the perſon.

2. An unfeigned willingneſs may have divers degrees. Some things I am ſo far willing of as that I will do all that lieth in my power to accompliſh them : and ſome things I am truly

truly willing another ſhould do, when yet I will not do all that ever I am able to procure them, having many reaſons to diſſuade me therefrom, though yet I will do all that belongs me to do.

3. The will of a ruler, as ſuch, is manifeſted in making and executing laws; but the will of a man, in his ſimple natural capacity, or as abſolute Lord of his own, is manifeſted in deſiring or reſolving of events.

4. A ruler's will, as lawgiver, is firſt and principally that his laws be obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on ſuppoſition that they will not obey his laws. But a ruler's will, as judge, ſuppoſeth the law already either kept or broken; and therefore he reſolveth on rewards or puniſhments accordingly.

Having given up theſe neceſſary diſtinctions, I ſhall next apply them to the caſe in hand in theſe following propoſitions.

1. It is in the glaſs of the word and creatures that in this life we muſt know God; and ſo, according to the nature of man, we aſcribe to him underſtanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, becauſe we are capable of no higher poſitive conceptions of him.

2. And, on the ſame grounds, we do (with the ſcripture) diſtinguiſh between the acts of God's will, as diverſified from the reſpects or

the objects, though as to God's essence they are all one.

3. And the bolder, because that, when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from his human nature.

4. And thus we say, that the simple complacency, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good according to the nature and degree of its goodness. And so he hath pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass.

5. And God, as ruler and law giver of the world, hath so far a practical will for their salvation, as to make them a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sin, if so be they will not unthankfully reject it, and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he doth all that, as a law giver or promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation.

6. But yet he resolveth, as law giver, that they that will not turn shall die: And, as judge when their day of grace is past, he will execute that decree.

7. So, that he thus unfeignedly willeth the conversion of those that never will be converted; but not as absolute Lord, with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon

a murderer,

a murderer, to see that he shall not murder and be hanged: But, if upon good reason he forbear this, and do but send to his subjects, and warn and intreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say, that he would not have them murder and be hanged: He takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear and live: And, if he do more for some, upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all the murderers and felons in the land, "I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live. But, if you will not, I have resolved for all this, that you shall die." The judge may truly say to the thief or murderer, "Alas, man, I have no delight in thy death: I had rather thou hadst kept the law, and saved thy life: but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust." So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live; yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing his laws; and therefore he has for all this fully resolved, that, if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God were so much against the death of the wicked as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned; whereas Christ telleth you that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation, as that he will teach you and warn you, and set

before

before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his miniſters to intreat you not to damn yourſelves, but accept his mercy, and ſo to leave you without excuſe. But, if this will not do, and if ſtill you be unconverted, he profeſſeth to you, he is reſolved on your damnation, and hath commanded us to ſay to you in his name, ver. 18. "O wicked man, thou ſhalt ſurely die!" And Chriſt hath little leſs than ſworn it over and over, with a "Verily, verily, except you be converted, and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," *Matt.* xviii. 3. *John* iii. 3. Mark that he ſaith *you cannot*. It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing of it, for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you ſee then the meaning of the text, that God, the great law giver of the world, doth take no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; though yet he be reſolved that none ſhall live but thoſe that turn, and, as a judge, even delighteth in juſtice, and manifeſting his hatred of ſin, though not in their miſery, which they have brought upon themſelves, in itſelf conſidered.

2. And, for the proofs of this point, I ſhall be very brief in them, becauſe I ſuppoſe you eaſily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God, proclaimed, *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, and xx. 6. and frequently

quently elſewhere, may aſſure you of this, that he hath no pleaſure in your death.

2. If God had more pleaſure in thy death than in thy converſion and life, he would not have ſo frequently commanded thee in his word to turn; he would not have made thee ſuch promiſes of life, if thou wilt but turn; he would not have perſuaded thee to it by ſo many reaſons. The tenor of his goſpel proveth the point.

3. And his commiſſion, that he had given to the miniſters of his goſpel, doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleaſure in thy damnation than in thy converſion and ſalvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately, and to intreat and beſeech you to turn and live; to acquaint you with your ſins, and foretel you of your danger, and to do all that poſſibly we can for your converſion, and to continue patiently ſo doing, though you ſhould hate or abuſe us for our pains. Would God have done this, and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleaſure in your death?

4. It is proved alſo by the courſe of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and ſaved, he would not ſecond his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindneſs to himſelf, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means to lead you to repentance, *Rom.* ii. 4.

and bring you ſo often under his rod to force you into your wits. He would not ſet ſo many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you ſo patiently as he doth, from day to day, and year to year. Theſe are no ſigns of one that taketh pleaſure in your death. If this had been his delight, how eaſily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How often before this could he have caught the away in the midſt of thy ſins, with a curſe, or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance, and pride, and ſenſuality? When thou waſt laſt in thy drunkenneſs, or laſt deriding the ways of God, how eaſily could he have ſtopped thy breath, and tamed thee with his plagues, and made thee ſober in another world! Alas, how ſmall a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the prophaneſt railer, and tie the hands of the moſt malicious perſecutor, or calm the fury of the bittereſt of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms? If he ſhould frown upon thee, thou wouldſt drop into thy grave. If he gave commiſſion to one of his angels to go and deſtroy ten thouſand ſinners, how quickly would it be done. How eaſily can he lay thee upon the bed of languiſhing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou haſt ſpoken againſt his ſervants, his word, his worſhip, and his holy ways, and make thee ſend to beg their prayers whom thou didſt deſpiſe in thy preſumption.

How

How eaſily can he lay thy fleſh under gripes and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy ſoul, and make it more loathſome than the dung of the earth? That fleſh which now muſt have what it loves, and muſt not be diſpleaſed though God be diſpleaſed, and muſt be humoured in meat, drinks, and clothes, whatever God ſays to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God conſume it?—When thou waſt paſſionately defending thy ſin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and ſhewing thy ſpleen againſt the reprover, and pleading for the works of darkneſs; how eaſily could God have ſnatched thee away in a moment, and ſet thee before his dreadful majeſty, where thou ſhouldeſt ſee ten thouſand times ten thouſand of glorious angels waiting on his throne? and have called thee there to plead thy cauſe, and aſked thee, "What haſt thou now to ſay againſt thy Creator, his truth, his ſervants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cauſe, and make the beſt of it thou canſt. Now what canſt thou ſay in excuſe for thy ſins? Now give an account of thy worldlineſs and fleſhly life, of thy time, of all the mercies thou haſt had! O how thy ſtubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance turned pale, and thy ſtout words changed into ſpeechleſs ſilence, or dreadful cries, if God had but ſet thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cauſe with thee, which thou haſt here ſo maliciouſly

liciouſly pleaded againſt! How eaſily can he at any time ſay to thy guilty ſoul, "Come away, and live in that fleſh no more till the reſurrection," and it cannot reſiſt! A word of his mouth would take off the poiſe of thy preſent life, and then all thy parts and powers would ſtand ſtill: And if he ſay unto thee, "Live no longer, or live in hell," thou couldſt not diſobey.

But God hath yet done none of this, but hath patiently forborne thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath which thou didſt breathe out againſt him, and given thoſe mercies which thou didſt ſacrifice to thy fleſh, and afford thee that proviſion, which thou ſpenteſt to ſatisfy thy greedy throat; he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didſt waſte in idleneſs, or drunkenneſs, or worldlineſs: And doth not all his patience and mercy ſhew that he deſired not thy damnation? Can the candle burn without the oil? Can your houſes ſtand without the earth to bear them? As well can you live one hour without the ſupport of God. And why did he ſo long ſupport thy life, but to ſee when thou wouldſt bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live. Will any man purpoſely put arms into his enemy's hands to reſiſt him; or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children, or to an idle ſervant that plays or ſleeps the while? Surely it is to ſee

whether

whether thou wilt at laſt return and live that God hath ſo long waited on thee.

5. It is farther proved, by the ſufferings of his Son, that God taketh no pleaſure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ranſomed them from death at ſo dear a rate? Would he have aſtoniſhed angels and men by his condeſcenſion? Would God have dwelt in fleſh, and have come in the form of a ſervant, and have aſſumed humanity into one perſon with the Godhead? And would Chriſt have lived a life of ſuffering, and died a curſed death for ſinners, if he had rather taken pleaſure in their death? Suppoſe you ſaw him but ſo buſy in preaching, and healing of them, as you find him in *Mark* iii. 21. or ſo long in faſting, as in *Matt.* iv. or all night in prayer, as in *Luke* vi. 12. or praying with the drops of blood trickling from him inſtead of ſweat, as *Luke* xxii. 44. or ſuffering a curſed death upon the croſs, and pouring out his ſoul as a ſacrifice for our ſins: Would you have thought theſe the ſigns of one that delighteth in the death of the wicked.

And think not to extenuate it by ſaying, that it was only for his elect: For, it was thy ſin, and the ſin of all the world that lay upon our Redeemer; and his ſacrifice and ſatisfaction are ſufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another: but it is true, that it was never the intent of his mind to pardon and ſave any that would not by faith

and

and repentance be converted. If you had ſeen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the ſtate of diſobedient, impenitent people, *Luke* xiv. 41, 42, or complaining of their ſtubbornneſs, as *Matt.* xxiii. 37. "O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Or, if you had ſeen or heard him on the croſs praying for his perſecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," would you have ſuſpected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of thoſe that periſh by their wilful unbelief? When God hath ſo loved, (not only loved but ſo loved) the world, as to give his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him, by an effectual faith, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life; I think he hath hereby proved, againſt the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would turn and live.

6. Laſtly, if all this will not yet ſatisfy you, take his own word, that knoweth beſt his own mind, or at leaſt believe his oath: But this leadeth me up to the fourth doctrine.

Doct. 4. *The Lord hath confirmed to us, by his oath, that he hath no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live; that he may leave man no pretence to queſtion the truth of it.*

If

If you dare queſtion his word, I hope you dare not queſtion his oath. As Chriſt hath ſolemnly proteſted that the ungenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, *Matt.* xviii. 3. *John* iii. 3, ſo God hath ſworn that his pleaſure is not in their death, but in their converſion and life. And as the Apoſtle ſaith, *Heb.* vi. 13, 16, 17, 18. Becauſe he can ſwear by no greater than himſelf, he ſaith, "As I live, &c." For men verily ſwear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of ſtrife: wherein God, willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of promiſe the immutability of his counſel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope ſet before us, which we have, as an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt." If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predeſtination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he hath no pretence left to deny or queſtion therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore muſt not be diſtorted to reduce it to other points; but doubtful points muſt rather be reduced to it, and certain truths muſt be believed to agree with it, though our ſhallow brains, do hardly diſcern the agreement.

USE

U S E.

I do now intreat thee, if thou be an unconverted ſinner that heareſt theſe words, that thou wouldſt ponder a little on the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyſelf awhile, who it is that takes pleaſure in thy ſin and damnation! Certainly it is not God: He hath ſworn, for his part, that he takes no pleaſure in it. And I know it is not the pleaſing of him that you intend in it. You dare not ſay, that you drink, and ſwear, and neglect holy duties and quench the motion of the Spirit, to pleaſe God. That were as if you ſhould reproach the prince, and break his laws, and ſeek his death, and ſay, you did all this to pleaſe him.

Who is it then that takes pleaſure in your ſin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they muſt be like minded to him. God knows it is ſmall pleaſure to your faithful teachers to ſee you ſerve your deadly enemy and madly venture your eternal ſtate, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is ſmall pleaſure to them to ſee upon your ſouls (in the ſad effects) ſuch blindneſs, and hard heartedneſs, and careleſſneſs, and preſumption; ſuch wilfulneſs in evil, and ſuch unteachableneſs and ſtiffneſs againſt the ways of life and peace. They know theſe are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know from the word of God what is like to be the end of them; and therefore it is no more pleaſure to

them

them than to a tender phyſician to ſee the plague marks break out upon his patient. Alas! to forſee your everlaſting torments, and know not how to prevent them! To ſee how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and conſider it! To ſee how eaſily, how certainly you might eſcape, if we knew but how to make you willing! How fair you are for everlaſting ſalvation, if you would but turn and do your beſt, and make it the care and buſineſs of your lives! but you will not do it. If our lives lay on it, we cannot perſuade you to it. We ſtudy day and night what to ſay to you, that may convince you and perſuade you, and yet it is undone. We lay before you the word of God, and ſhew you the very chapter and verſe where it is written, that you cannot be ſaved except you be converted, and yet we leave the moſt of you as we find you. We hope you will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and that you will regard it when we ſhew you the plain ſcripture for it: but we hope in vain, and labour in vain, as to any ſaving change upon your hearts. And do you think that this is a pleaſant thing to us? Many a time in ſecret prayer we are fain to complain to God with ſad hearts. ["Alas! Lord, we have ſpoken to them in thy name, but they little regard us: We have told them what thou bidſt us tell them concerning the danger of an unconverted ſtate, but they do not believe us;

we have told them that thou haſt proteſted that there is no peace to the wicked," *Iſaiah* xlviii. 22. and lvii. 21. but the worſt of them all will ſcarce believe that they are wicked; we have ſhewn them thy word, where thou haſt ſaid, "That if they live after the fleſh they ſhall die," *Rom.* viii. 13. but they ſay, "They will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee; that they will truſt in thee, when they give no credit to thy word; and when they have hope that the threatnings of thy words are falſe, they will yet call this a hoping in God: and though we ſhew them where thou haſt ſaid, that when a wicked man dieth all his hopes periſh, yet cannot we perſuade them from their deceitful hopes," *Prov.* xi. 7.—We tell them what a baſe unprofitable thing ſin is; but they love it, and therefore will not leave it.—We tell them how dear they buy this pleaſure, and that they muſt pay for it in everlaſting torment; and they bleſs themſelves, and will not believe it; but will do as the moſt do: and, becauſe God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their ſouls, come of it what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them; and this doth but make them delay their repentance and be bolder in their ſin.—Some of them ſay they purpoſe to repent, but they are ſtill the ſame; and ſome ſay they do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their ſins. We exhort them,

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we intreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them ; but they that were drunkards are drunkards ſtill ; and they that were voluptuous fleſh pleaſing wretches are ſuch ſtill ; and they that were worldings are worldings ſtill ; and they that were ignorant, and proud, and ſelf conceited, are ſo ſtill.—Few of them will ſee and confeſs their ſin, and fewer will forſake it, but comfort themſelves that all men are ſinners ; as if there were no difference between a converted ſinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to inſtruct them, but think they have enough already, and need not our inſtruction ; and ſome of them will give us the hearing, and do what they liſt ; and moſt of them are like dead men that cannot feel ; ſo that, when we tell them of the matters of everlaſting conſequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humour them in baptizing the children of the moſt obſtinately wicked, and giving them the Lord's Supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never ſo much againſt the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us ; but, if we beſeech them but to confeſs and forſake their ſins, and ſave their ſouls, they will not do it.—We tell them, if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptiſm to their children, nor the Lord's Supper to themſelves ; but they

will

will not hear us. They would have us to disobey God, and damn our own ſouls to pleaſe them, and yet they will not turn and ſave their ſouls to pleaſe God.—They are wiſer in their own eyes than all the teachers; they rage and are confident in their own way, and, if we would never ſo fain, we cannot change them. Lord, this is the caſe of our miſerable neighbours, and we cannot help it; we ſee them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it; we know if they would unfeignedly turn they might be ſaved, but we cannot perſuade them; if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot perſuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot perſuade them; and what more can we do?]

Theſe are the ſecret complaints and moans that many a poor miniſter is fain to make. And do you think that he hath any pleaſure in this? Is it a pleaſure to him to ſee you go on in ſin, and cannot ſtop you! To ſee you ſo miſerable, and cannot ſo much as make you ſenſible of it; to ſee you merry, when you are not ſure to be an hour out of hell? To think what you muſt for ever ſuffer, becauſe you will not turn? And to think what an everlaſting life of glory you wilfully deſpiſe and caſt away? What ſadder thing can you bring to their hearts? And how can you deviſe to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you pleaſure by your ſin and death? It is none of your underſtanding

godly

godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their ſouls to ſee your miſery; and they lament you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourſelves.

Who is it then that takes pleaſure in your ſin? It is none but the three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptiſm, and are now turned falſely to ſerve.

1. The devil indeed takes pleaſure in your ſin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations. For this, he watches night and day: you cannot deviſe to pleaſe him better than to go on in ſin: how glad is he when he ſees thee going to the alehouſe, or other ſin, and when he heareth thee curſe, or ſwear, or rail? How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the miniſter that would draw thee from thy ſin, and help to ſave thee? Theſe are his delight.

2. The wicked are alſo delighted in it: for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleaſing of the devil you intend, even when you pleaſe him; but it is your own fleſh, the greateſt and moſt dangerous enemy, that you intend to pleaſe. It is the fleſh that would be pampered, that would be pleaſed in meat, and drink, and clothing, that would be pleaſed in your company, and pleaſed in applauſe and credit with the world, and pleaſed in ſports, and luſts, and idleneſs: this

is the gulf that devoureth all. This is the very god that you ſerve, (for, the ſcripture ſaith of ſuch, "that their bellies are their gods," *Phil.* iii. 18.)

But I beſeech you ſtay a little, and conſider the buſineſs.

1 *Queſt.* Should your fleſh be pleaſed before your Maker? Will you diſpleaſe the Lord, and diſpleaſe your teachers, and your godly friends, and all to pleaſe your brutiſh appetites or ſenſual deſires? Is not God worthy to be the ruler of your fleſh? If he ſhall not rule it, he will not ſave it: you cannot in reaſon expect that he ſhould.

2 *Queſt.* Your fleſh is pleaſed with your ſin; but is your conſcience pleaſed? doth it not grudge within you and tell you ſometimes that all is not well, and that your caſe is not ſo ſafe as you make it to be? and ſhould not your ſoul and conſcience be pleaſed before that corruptible fleſh?

3 *Queſt.* But, is not your fleſh preparing for its own diſpleaſure alſo? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the ſtrong drink and ſweet morſels; it loves its eaſe, and ſport, and merriment: it loves to be rich, and well ſpoken of by men, and to be ſomebody in the world: but doth it love the curſe of God? Doth it love to ſtand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlaſting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils forever? Take all together: for there is no ſeparating

ſin

ſin and hell, but only by faith and true converſion; if you will keep one you muſt have the other. If death and hell be pleaſant to you, no wonder then you go on in ſin; but if they are not (as I am ſure they are not) then what if ſin were never ſo pleaſant, is it worth the loſs of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or eaſe; is the good word of ſinners; are the riches of this world to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the ſufferings of eternal fire?

Theſe queſtions ſhould be conſidered before you go any farther, by every man that hath reaſon to conſider, and that believes he hath a ſoul to ſave or loſe.

Well, the Lord here ſweareth that he hath no pleaſure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live: if yet you will go on, and die rather than turn; remember it was not to pleaſe God that you did it; it was to pleaſe the world, and to pleaſe yourſelves. And, if men will damn themſelves to pleaſe themſelves, and run into endleſs torments for delight, and have not the wit, the heart, the grace, to hearken to God or man, that would reclaim them, what remedy? They muſt take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late! Before I proceed any farther in the application, I ſhall come to the next doctrine; which giveth me a fuller ground for it.

Doct.

Doct. 5. *So earneſt is God for the converſion of ſinners, that he doubleth his commands and exhortations with vehemency:* "*Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ?*

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by an uſe of exhortation, and accordingly I ſhall handle it.

Is there ever an unconverted ſinner that heareth theſe vehement words of God ? Is there ever a man or woman in this aſſembly that is yet a ſtranger to the renewing, ſanctifying work of the Holy Ghoſt ? (It is a happy aſſembly if it be not ſo with the moſt.) Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Chriſt without delay. Would you know the will of God ? Why this is his will, that you preſently turn. Shall the living God ſend ſo earneſt a meſſage to his creatures, and ſhould they not obey ? Hearken then, all you that live after the fleſh ; the Lord, that gave thee thy breath and being, hath ſent a meſſage to thee from heaven ; and this is his meſſage, " Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ?" He, that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majeſty be neglected ? If he do but terribly thunder thou art afraid. O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee. If he do but tell thee, thou ſhalt die tomorrow, thou wouldſt not make light of it. O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlaſting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had ſaid

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to thee, "I charge thee upon the allegiance that thou oweſt to me, thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the fleſh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me that thou mayeſt live. I condeſcend to intreat thee, as thou loveſt or feareſt him that made thee: as thou loveſt thine own life, even thine everlaſting life, Turn and live: As ever thou wouldſt eſcape eternal miſery, "Turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reaſonable creature, that can once refuſe ſuch a meſſage, ſuch a command, ſuch an exhortation as this! O what a thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all that love yourſelves, and all that regard your own ſalvation:— Here is the joyfulleſt meſſage that ever was ſent to the ears of man, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" You are not yet ſhut up under deſperation. Here is mercy offered to you; turn, and you ſhall have it. O with what joyful hearts ſhould you receive theſe tidings! I know this is not the firſt time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant careleſs ſinners, the word of the Lord! Hear, all you worldlings, you ſenſual fleſhpleaſers, you gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and ſwearers; you railers and backbiters, ſlanderers, and liars: "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Hear,

Hear, all ye that are void of the love of God, whoſe hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but ſet more by your earthly proſperity and delights than by the joys of heaven ; all you that are religious but a little by the by, and give God no more than your fleſh can ſpare; that have not denied your carnal ſelves, and forſaken all that you have for Chriſt, in the eſtimation and grounded reſolution of your ſouls, but have ſome one thing in the world ſo dear to you, that you cannot ſpare it from Chriſt if he require it, but will rather venture on his diſpleaſure than forſake it ; " Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

If you never heard it, or obſerved it before, remember that you were told it from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live ; and if you will not turn, you ſhall ſurely die.

What now will you do Sirs ? what is your reſolution ? will you turn, or will you not ? Halt not any longer between two opinions : If the Lord be God, follow him ; if your fleſh be God, then ſerve it ſtill. If heaven be better than earth and fleſhly pleaſures, come away then, and ſeek a better country, and " lay up your treaſure where ruſt and moths do not corrupt, and thieves connot break through and ſteal, and be awakened at laſt with all your might to ſeek the kingdom that cannot be moved," *Heb.* xii. 28. and to employ your

lives

lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labours another way than formerly you have done. But, if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

Consider first, "what preparations mercy hath made for your salvation: and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back if thou hadst been ever so willing to turn to God: The time was when thyself, and all the friends that thou hast in the world, could never have procured thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst ever so much lamented and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment by the ransom of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law: but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and intreateth thee to accept it, and it may be thine if thou wilt. "For he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to us the word of actual reconciliation," *2 Cor.* v. 18, 19.

Sinners,

Sinners, we are commanded to do this meſſage to you all, as from the Lord, ["Come for all things are ready," *Luke* xiv. 17.] Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you, and pardon all that you have done againſt him, if you will but come. As long as you have ſinned, as wilfully as you have ſinned, as heinouſly as you have ſinned, he is ready to caſt all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have ſtaid ſo long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your converſion, if you will but turn. Even the earthly wordling and ſwiniſh drunkard may find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee?—O ſinner, if thou have a heart of fleſh, and not of ſtone in thee, methinks this ſhould melt it. Shall the infinite Majeſty of Heaven even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee who hath abuſed him, and forgotten him ſo long? Shall he delight in thy converſion, that might at any time glorify his juſtice in thy damnation, and yet doth it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Haſt thou not as much reaſon to be ready to come, as God hath to invite thee, and bid thee welcome.

But, this is not all: Chriſt hath done his part on the croſs, and made ſuch way for thee

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to the Father, that on his account thou mayſt be welcome if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expreſsly granted and offered thee in the goſpel. And yet art thou not ready?

The miniſters of the goſpel are ready to aſſiſt thee, to inſtruct thee; they are ready to pray for thee, and to ſeal up thy pardon by the adminiſtration of the holy ſacrament; and yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee are ready to rejoice in thy converſion, and to receive thee into the communion of ſaints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowſhip, yea, though thou hadſt been one that had been caſt out of their ſociety: they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifeſt to them by the confeſſion and amendment: they dare not ſo much as hit thee in the teeth with thy former ſins, becauſe they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadſt been ever ſo ſcandalous, if thou wouldſt but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuſe thee: let the world ſay what they would againſt it. And, are all theſe ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, heaven itſelf is ready; the Lord will receive thee into the glory of his ſaints, a vile brute as thou haſt been, if thou wilt but be

cleanſed thou mayſt have a place before his throne : his angels will be ready to guard thy ſoul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the ſacrifice of Chriſt ready, the promiſe ready, and pardon ready ?—Are miniſters ready, and the people of God ready, and heaven itſelf ready, and angels ready, and all theſe but waiting for thy converſion, and yet art not thou ready ? What ! not ready to live, when thou haſt been dead ſo long ? Not ready to come to thy right underſtanding, as the prodigal is ſaid to come to himſelf, (*Luke* xv. 17.) when thou haſt been beſide thyſelf ſo long ? Not ready to be ſaved, when thou art even ready to be condemned ?—Art thou not ready to lay hold on Chriſt, that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to drown and ſink into damnation ? Art thou not ready to be ſaved from hell, when thou art even ready to be caſt remedileſsly into it ? Alas, man ! doſt thou know what thou doſt ? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation, and thou art not ſure to live an hour : and yet art thou not ready to turn and come in ? O miſerable wretch ! haſt thou not ſerved the fleſh and the devil long enough ? Yet haſt thou not enough of ſin ? Is it ſo good to thee ; or ſo profitable for thee ?—Doſt thou know what it is, that thou wouldſt yet have more of it ? Haſt thou had ſo many calls, and ſo many mercies, and ſo many blows, and ſo

many

many examples! Haſt thou ſeen ſo many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy ſins, and come to Chriſt? What! after ſo many convictions, and gripes of conſcience, after ſo many purpoſes and promiſes art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart, were opened, to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful meſſage it is we are ſent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready.

2. Conſider alſo what calls thou haſt to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earneſt, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging, joyful calls.

For, the principal inviter, it is God himſelf, He, that commandeth heaven and earth, commandeth thee to turn; and preſently, without delay, to turn: He commands the ſun to run its courſe, and to riſe upon thee every morning; and though it be ſo glorious a creature, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth all the planets and the orbs of heaven, and they obey; he commandeth the ſea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its courſe, and all obey him. The angels of heaven obey his will, when he ſends them to miniſter to ſuch ſilly worms as we on earth, *Heb.* i. 14.—And yet, if he command but a ſinner to turn, he will not obey him; he only thinks himſelf wiſer than God, and he cavils and pleads the cauſe

yet,

of ſin, and will not away. If the Lord Almighty ſay the word, the heavens and all therein obey him; but if he call a drunkard out of an alehouſe, he will not obey; or if he call a worldly fleſhly ſinner to deny himſelf, and mortify the fleſh, and ſet his heart on a better inheritance, he will not obey him.

If thou haſt any love in thee, thou wouldſt know the voice and ſay, "Oh this is my father's call! how can I find in my heart to diſobey? For, the ſheep of Chriſt do know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life," *John* x. 4. If thou hadſt any ſpiritual life and ſenſe in thee, at leaſt thou wouldſt ſay, "This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dares diſobey?"—For, ſaith the prophet, *Amos* iii. 8. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" God is not as man, that thou ſhouldſt dally and play with him: remember what he ſaith to Paul at his converſion, "It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks," *Acts* ix. 5. Wilt thou yet go and deſpiſe his word, and reſiſt his Spirit, and ſtop thine ear againſt his call? Who is it that will have the worſt of this? Doſt thou know whom thou diſobeyeſt and contendeſt with, and what thou art doing! It were a far wiſer and eaſier taſk for thee to contend with the thorns, and ſpurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked," *Gal.* vi. 7.

Whoever

Whoever elſe be mocked, God will not: You had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath: "For our God is a conſuming fire," *Heb.* xii. 29. O how unmeet a match art thou for God! It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands," *Heb.* x. 31. and therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him or reſiſt him. As you love your ſouls, take heed what you do. What will you ſay, If he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? Will you not ſtrive againſt his judgment as now ye do againſt his grace? Saith the Lord, *Iſaiah* xxvii. 4, 6. "Fury is not in me;" that is, I delight not to deſtroy you: I do it as it were unwillingly; but yet, "Who would ſet the briars and thorns againſt me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Oh let him take hold of my ſtrength, that he may make peace with me, and he ſhall make peace with me!"—It is an unequal combat for the briars and ſtubble to make war with the fire.

And thus you ſee who it is that calleth you, that ſhould move you to hear all this call, and turn; ſo conſider alſo, by what inſtruments, and how often, and how earneſtly, he doth it.

1. Every leaf of the bleſſed book of God hath as it were a voice, and calls unto thee, *Turn and live; turn, or thou wilt die!* How canſt thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

2. It is the voice of every ſermon thou heareſt: For what elſe is the ſcope and drift of all, but to call and perſuade, and entreat thee to turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit, that ſecretly ſpeaks over theſe words again, and urgeth thee to turn.

4. It is likely, ſometimes, it is the voice of thy own conſcience. Art thou not ſometimes convinced that all is not well with thee! And doth not conſcience tell thee, that thou muſt be a new man, and take a new courſe, and often call upon thee to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou ſeeſt them live a heavenly life, and fly from the ſin which is thy delight, this really calls on thee to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God. For, they alſo are God's books, that teach thee this leſſon, by ſhewing thee his greatneſs, and wiſdom, and goodneſs, and calling thee to obſerve them, and admire the Creator, *Pſalm* xix. 1, 2. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy work; day unto day uttereth ſpeech, night unto night ſheweth knowledge."—Every time the ſun riſeth upon thee, it really calleth thee to turn; as if it ſhould ſay, "What do I travel and compaſs the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I ſtill find thee doing the

work

work of ſin, and ſleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light," *Epheſ.* v. 14. "The night is ſpent, the day is at hand; it is now high time to awake out of ſleep; let us therefore caſt off the works of darkneſs, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honeſtly as in the day, not rioting, and in drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof," *Rom.* xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14.—This text was the means of Auſtin's converſion.

7. It is the voice of every mercy thou doſt poſſeſs. If thou couldſt but hear and underſtand them, they all cry out unto thee, turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to ſeek and ſerve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee its fruits, but to ſerve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath but to ſerve him? Why do all the creatures ſerve thee with their labours and their lives, but that thou mighteſt ſerve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, health, and ſtrength, but for to ſerve him? Why haſt thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his ſervice? Haſt thou any thing which thou haſt not received? And, if thou didſt receive them, it is reaſon thou ſhouldſt bethink thee, from whom, and to what end and uſe, thou didſt receive them.

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Didſt thou never cry to him for help in thy diſtreſs? And didſt thou then underſtand that it was thy part to turn and ſerve him if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and ſpared thee yet longer, and tried thee another and another year; and yet doſt thou not turn? You know the parable of the unfruitful figtree, *Luke* xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9. When the Lord had ſaid, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? He was intreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Chriſt himſelf there makes the application twice over, *ver.* 3 and 5. "Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh." How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holineſs from thee, and hath found none, and yet he hath ſpared thee. How many a time, by thy wilful ignorance, and careleſsneſs, and diſobedience, haſt thou provoked juſtice to ſay, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" And yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the fatal blow till this day. If thou hadſt the underſtanding of a man within thee, thou wouldſt know that all this calleth thee to turn. "Doſt thou think thou ſhalt ſtill eſcape the judgment of God? Or deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardneſs and impenitent heart, treaſureſt up unto thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath,

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and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds," *Rom.* ii. 3, 4, 5, 6.

8. Moreover, it is the voice of every affliction to call thee to make haſte and turn. Sickneſs and pain cry turn; and poverty and loſs of friends, and every twig of the chaſtiſing rod cry turn; and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? Theſe have come near thee, and made thee feel, they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

9. The very frame of thy nature and being itſelf beſpeaketh thy return. Why haſt thou reaſon, but to rule thy fleſh, and ſerve thy Lord? Why haſt thou an underſtanding ſoul, but to learn and know his will and do it? Why haſt thou a heart within thee, that can love, and fear, and deſire, but that thou ſhouldſt fear him, and love him, and deſire after him?

10. Yea, thine own engagements, by promiſe to the Lord, do call upon thee to turn and ſerve him. Thou haſt bound thyſelf to him by a baptiſmal covenant, and renounced the world, the fleſh and the devil; this thou haſt confirmed by the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and renewed it at ſacraments, and in times of affliction: And wilt thou promiſe and vow, and never perform, and turn to God?

Lay all theſe together, now, and ſee what ſhould be the iſſue. The holy ſcripture calleth upon thee to turn; the miniſters of Chriſt

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do call upon thee to turn: the Spirit cries turn; thy conſcience cries turn; the godly, by perſuaſions and examples, cry turn; the whole world, and all the creatures therein, that are preſented to thy conſideration, cry turn; the preſent forbearance of God, cries turn; all the mercies which thou receiveſt cry turn; the rod of God's chaſtiſement cries turn; thy reaſon, and the frame of thy nature beſpeaks thy turning; and ſo do all thy promiſes to God; and yet haſt thou not reſolved to turn?

II. Moreover, poor ſinner! didſt thou ever conſider upon what terms thou ſtandeſt all this while with him that calleth on thee to turn? Thou art his own, and oweſt him thyſelf and all thou haſt, and may he not command his own? Thou art his abſolute ſervant, and ſhould ſerve no other maſter. Thou ſtandeſt at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand; and he has reſolved to ſave thee upon no other terms; thou haſt many malicious ſpiritual enemies, that would be glad if God would but forſake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner? And thou canſt not be delivered from them but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy ſin already; and thou knoweſt not how long his patience will yet wait. perhaps this

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is the laſt year; perhaps the laſt day; his ſword is even at thy heart while the word is in thine ear; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to ſee where thou ſtandeſt, even upon the brink of hell, and to ſee how many thouſands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldſt ſee that it is time to look about thee.

Well, Sirs, look inwards now, and tell me, how are your hearts affected with theſe offers of the Lord? You hear what is his mind; he delighteh not in your death; he calls to you, *Turn, turn*: It is a fearful ſign if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee; and much more if it make thee more careleſs in thy miſery, becauſe thou heareſt of the mercifulneſs of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to thoſe, that are now in hell, if they had but ſuch a meſſage from God! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, Turn and live. Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyſelf, when thou haſt felt that wrath of God but an hour! or, if after a thouſand or ten thouſand years torment thou couldſt but hear ſuch a word from God, Turn, and live and yet wilt thou now neglect it, and ſuffer us to return without our errand.

Behold, ſinners, we are ſent here as the meſſengers of the Lord, to ſet before you life

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and death. What ſay you? Which of them will you chooſe? Chriſt ſtandeth, as it were, by thee, with heaven in one hand, and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice; which wilt thou chooſe?—"The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble," *Pſalm* xxvi. and is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn? Doſt thou not underſtand and feel this voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"—Why, it is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy beſt and kindeſt friend, as thou mighteſt eaſily perceive by the motion and yet canſt thou neglect it? It is the voice of pity. The Lord ſeeth whither thou art going better than thou doſt, which makes him call after thee, "Turn, turn." He ſeeth what will become of thee if thou turn not. He thinketh with himſelf, "Ah this poor ſinner will caſt himſelf, into endleſs torments if he do not turn; I muſt in juſtice deal with him according to my righteous law;" and therefore he calleth after thee, Turn, turn, O ſinner! If you did but know the thouſandth part as well as God doth, the danger that is near you, and the miſery that you are running into, we ſhould have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calleth to thee, is the ſame that hath prevailed with thouſands already, and called all to heaven that are now there: And they would not now, for a thouſand worlds, that they had made light of

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it, and not turned to God. Now what are they poſſeſſing that turned to God's call? Now they perceive that it was indeed the voice of love that meant them no more harm than their ſalvation. And, if thou wilt obey the ſame call, thou ſhalt come to the ſame happineſs. There are millions that muſt for ever lament that they turned not; but there is never a ſoul in heaven that is ſorry that they are converted.

Well, Sirs, have you yet reſolved, or have you uot? Do I need to ſay any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak, man, in thy heart to God, though thou ſpeak not out to me; ſpeak, leſt he take thy ſilence for denial; ſpeak quickly, leſt he never make thee the like offer more. Speak reſolvedly, and not waveringly, for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now, without any more delay, even before thou ſtir from hence. "By the grace of God, I have reſolved preſently to turn. And becauſe I know my own inſufficiency, I have reſolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forſake my former courſes and companions, and give up myſelf to the guidance of the Lord."

You are not ſhut up in the darkneſs of heatheniſm, nor in the deſperation of the damned. Life is before you; and you may have it on reaſonable terms, if you will; yea, on free coſt, if you will accept it. The way of God lieth

plain before you; the church is open to you; you may have Chriſt, and pardon, and holineſs if you will. What ſay you? Will you, or will you not? If you ſay nay, or ſay nothing, and ſtill go on, God is witneſs, and this congregation is witneſs, and your own conſciences are witneſſes, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember, you might have had Chriſt, and would not. Remember, when you have loſt it, that you might have had eternal life as well as others, and would not; and all becauſe you would not turn.

SERMON III.

EZEK. xxxiii. 11.

SAY UNTO THEM, AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD GOD, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE. TURN YE, TURN YE, FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?

IT has been explained, and proved, that God taketh pleaſure in men's converſion and ſalvation, but not in their death or damnation. He would rather they would turn and live, than go on and die:—That he may leave man no pretence to doubt of it, the Lord hath confirmed it to us by his oath. Yea, farther, ſo earneſt is God for the converſion of

ſinners,

ſinners, that he doubleth his commands and exhortations with vehemency, *Turn, ye, turn ye.*

Having already illuſtrated and applied each of theſe points, let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reaſons.

Doct. 6. *The Lord condeſcended to reaſon the caſe with unconverted ſinners, and to aſk them why they will die.*

A ſtrange diſputation it is, both as to cotroverſy, and as to the diſputants.

1. The controverſy or queſtion, propounded to diſpute of, is, "Why wicked men will damn themſelves?" Or, "Why they will rather die than turn?" Whether they have any ſufficient reaſon for ſo doing?

2. The diſputants are God and man; the moſt holy God, and wicked unconverted ſinners.

Is it not a ſtrange thing, which God doth ſeem here to ſuppoſe, that any man ſhould be willing to die and be damned? Yea, that this ſhould be the caſe of all the wicked; that is, of the greateſt part of the world: But, you will ſay, this cannot be, for nature deſireth the preſervation and felicity of itſelf, and the wicked are more ſelfiſh than others, and not leſs; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?

To which I anſwer:

1. It is a certain truth that no man can be willing of any evil as evil, but only as it hath ſome appearance of good; much leſs can any

man

man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none.

2. But yet for all that, it is most true which God here teacheth us, that the cause, why the wicked die and are damned, is, because, *they will die and be damned.* And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, though they are told by God and man whither it goes and where it ends; and though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way, they shall be condemned, and that they shall not be saved unless they turn, *Isa.* xlviii. 22. and lvii. 21. "There is no peace saith the Lord, unto the wicked. *Isa.* lix. 8. "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." They have the word and the oath of the living God for it; that, if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest. And yet wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will; fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be; worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be; though God hath told them, that "the love of the world is enmity to God, and that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," *James* iv. 4. 1 *John* ii. 15. So that consequently these men are willing to be damned, though not directly; they are willing of the ways of hell, and love the certain

cause

cauſe of their torment, though they be not willing of hell itſelf, and do not love the pain which they muſt endure.

Is not this the truth of your caſe, ſinners? You would not burn in hell; but you will kindle the fire by your ſins, and caſt yourſelves into it; you would not be tormented with devils forever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it, in deſpight of all that can be ſaid againſt it. It is juſt as if you would ſay, "I will drink this poiſon, but yet I will not die. I will caſt myſelf headlong from the top of a ſteeple, but yet I will not kill myſelf.— I will thruſt this knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my houſe, but yet I will not burn it."—Juſt ſo it is with the wicked men; they will be wicked, and they will live after the fleſh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that the means do lead unto the end? and that God hath by his righteous law concluded, that ye muſt repent or periſh? He that will take poiſon, may as well ſay plainly, "I will kill myſelf;" for it will prove no better in the end: Though perhaps he loved it for the ſweetneſs of the ſugar that was mixt with it, and would not be perſuaded that it was poiſon, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence, that will ſave his life. So, if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the fleſh, you may as

well ſay plainly, "We will be damned," for ſo you ſhall be unleſs you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer, that would ſay, "I will ſteal and kill, but I ſhall not be hanged," when he knows that, if he do the one, the judge in juſtice will ſee that the other be done: If he ſay, "I will ſteal and murder," he may as well ſay plainly, "I will be hanged." So, if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well ſay plainly, "We will go to hell."

2. Moreover, the wicked will not uſe thoſe means, without which there is no hope of their ſalvation. He that will not eat, may as well ſay plainly, that he will not live, unleſs he can tell how to live without meat; he that will not go his journey, may as well ſay plainly, he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor ſuffer another to help him out, may as well ſay plainly he will be drowned. So, if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor uſe the means by which you ſhould be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well ſay plainly, you will de damned. For, if you have found out a way to be ſaved without converſion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea, this is not all, but the wicked are unwilling even of ſalvation itſelf. Tho' they may deſire ſomewhat which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itſelf, conſidered

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in the true nature of its felicity, they desire not; yea, their hearts are quite against it Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, and praise, and holiness, which are here to be attained, they have no mind of; much less of that which is so much greater: The joys of heaven are of so pure and spirital a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is, that God supposeth that the wicked are willing of their own destruction; they will rather venture on certain misery than be converted; and then, to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe, that they shall nevertheless escape.

2. And as this controversy is matter of wonder (that even men should be such enemies to themselves, as wilfully to cast away their souls) so are the disputants too. That God should stoop so low as thus to plead the case with man; and that men should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case; yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue!

No wonder they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: As God saith, *Ezek.* iii. 7. when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will

will not hearken unto me: For all the houſe of Iſrael are impudent and hard hearted." No wonder if they can plead againſt a miniſter, or a godly neighbour, when they will plead againſt the Lord himſelf, even againſt the plaineſt paſſages of his word, and think that hey have reaſon on their ſide: When they weary the Lord with their words, they ſay, "Wherein have we wearied him?" *Mal.* ii. 17. The prieſts, that deſpiſed his name, durſt aſk, "Wherein have we deſpiſed thy name?" And when they polluted his altar, and made the temple of the Lord contemptible, they durſt ſay, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" *Mal.* i. 6, 7. But, "Wo unto him, ſaith the Lord, that ſtriveth with his Maker: Let the potſherd ſtrive with the potſherds of the earth: Shall the clay ſay unto him that faſhioned it, What makeſt thou?" *Iſaiah* xlv. 9.

Queſt. But why is it that God will reaſon the caſe with man?

Anſ. 1. Becauſe that man, being a reaſonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with, and by reaſon to be perſuaded and overcome. God hath therefore endowed them with reaſon, that they might uſe it for him. One would think a reaſonable creature ſhould not go againſt the cleareſt and greateſt reaſon in the world, when it is ſet before him.

2. At leaſt, men ſhall ſee that God did require nothing of them that was unreaſonable,

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but that whatever he commanded them, and whatever he forbiddeth them, he hath all the right reaſon in the world on his ſide: And they have good reaſon to obey him, but none to diſobey. And thus even the damned ſhall be forced to juſtify God, and confeſs that it was but reaſon that they ſhould have turned to him; and they ſhall be forced to condemn themſelves, and confeſs that they had little reaſon to caſt away themſelves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their viſitation.

U S E.

Look up your beſt and ſtrongeſt reaſons, ſinners, if you will make good your way:—You ſee now with whom you have to deal.—What ſayeſt thou, unconverted, ſenſual wretch? Dareſt thou venture upon a diſpute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the liſts? God aſketh thee, why wilt thou die? Art thou furniſhed with a ſufficient anſwer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is miſtaken, and that thou art in the right? O what an undertaking is that!—Why, either he or you are miſtaken, when he is for your converſion, and you are againſt it. He calls upon you to turn, and you will not; he bids you do it preſently, even to day, while it is called to day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter.—He ſaith it muſt be a total change, and you muſt be holy, and new creatures, and born again; and you think that leſs may ſerve the

turn,

turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now? God or you? God calleth on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not; by your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? and, why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And, why will you not? Can you give any reason for it that is worthy to be called a reason?

I, that am but a worm, your fellowcreature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause; and I need not be discouraged, when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

1. I am sure it can be no good reason, which is against the God of truth and reason. It cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature but what it has from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were fatal presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator. What is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself, nor his own soul, that knoweth but

little

little of the things which he seeth, yet that is more ignorant than many of his neighbours, to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord? It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark madness of such as sin, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God: Yea, that those people in our parishes, that are so ignorant, that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them and cavil against them, when they can scarce speak sense, and will believe them no farther than agreeth with their foolish wisdom.

2. And, as I know that God must needs be in the right; so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his master's laws? and reason to dishonour the Lord of glory? and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him?—Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have reason to sin, should you not remember that "death

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is the wages of ſin," *Rom.* vi. 23. and think whether you have any reaſon to undo yourſelves, body and ſoul, forever?—You ſhould not only aſk whether you love the adder, but whether you love the ſting?—It is ſuch a thing for a man to caſt away his everlaſting happineſs, and to ſin againſt God, that no good reaſon can be given for it: but, the more any one pleads for it, the madder he ſheweth himſelf to be. Had you a lordſhip or a kingdom offered you for every ſin that you commit, it were not reaſon, but madneſs, to accept it. Could you by every ſin obtain the higheſt thing on earth that fleſh deſireth, it were no conſiderable value to perſuade you in reaſon to commit it. If it were to pleaſe your greateſt or deareſt friends, or to obey the greateſt prince on earth, or to ſave your lives, or to eſcape the greateſt earthly miſery; all theſe are of no conſideration to draw a man in reaſon to the committing of one ſin. If it were a right hand or a right eye that would hinder your ſalvation, it is the gainfulleſt way to caſt it away, rather than go to hell to ſave it. For there is no ſaving a part when you loſe the whole. So exceeding great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deſerveth once to be named in compariſon with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reaſonable excuſe for the neglect of matters of ſuch high and everlaſting

conſequence.

conſequence. A man can have no reaſon to croſs his ultimate end. Heaven is ſuch a thing, that, if you loſe it, nothing can ſupply the want or make up your loſs: And hell is ſuch a thing, that if you ſuffer it, nothing can remove your miſery, or give you eaſe and comfort. And therefore nothing can be a valuable conſideration to excuſe you for neglecting your own ſalvation: For, ſaith our Saviour, "What ſhall it profit a man to win the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? *Mark* viii. 36.

O Sirs, that you did but know what matters they are that we are now ſpeaking to you of! The ſaints in heaven have other kind of thoughts of theſe things. If the devil could come to them that live in the ſight and love of God, and ſhould offer them a cup of ale, or a whore, or merry company, or ſport, to entice them away from God and glory: I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion? Nay, or if he ſhould offer them to be kings of the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O with what hatred and holy ſcorn would they diſdain and reject the motion! And why ſhould not you do ſo, that have heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to ſee it? There is never a ſoul in hell but knows, by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleſhly pleaſure, and that it is not a little mirth, or pleaſure, or worldly riches, or

honour, or the good will or word of men, that will quench hell-fire, or make him a saver that loseth his soul. Oh if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say there could be no reason to warrant a man to damn his soul: you durst not sleep quietly another night before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand into the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it? but this is a thing that a man may have reason for; as bishop Crammer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to Popery. If you see a man cut off a leg or arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing that a man may have a good reason for; as many a man doth to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burnt to ashes, and to be tormented with racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered, that is a hard case to flesh and blood: but this a man may have good reason for, as you may see in *Heb.* xi. 33, 34, 35, 36. and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But, for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and for a man to run into the fire of hell, when he is told of it, and intreated to turn that he may be saved; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose

to get it; but nothing can pay for the loſs of heaven.

I beſeech you now let this word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced that you have no reaſon to deſtroy yourſelves, ſo tell me what reaſon have you to refuſe to turn, and live to God? What reaſon hath the verieſt worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant careleſs ſinner of you all, why you ſhould not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your ſouls as any other? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others? Should not your own ſouls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Hath not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a ſanctified people as well as they?

O Sirs, when God bringeth the matter down to the very principles of nature, and ſhews you that you have no more reaſon to be ungodly than you have to damn your own ſouls! If yet you will not underſtand and turn, it ſeems a deſperate caſe that you are in.

And now either you have reaſon for what you do, or you have not: if not, will you go on againſt reaſon itſelf? Will you do that which you have no reaſons for? But, if you think you have, produce them, and make the beſt of your matter. Reaſon the caſe a little with me, your fellow-creature, which is far eaſier than to reaſon the caſe with God. Tell me, man, here, before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why ſhouldſt thou not reſolve to

turn

turn this day, before thou ſtir from the place thou ſtandeſt in? What reaſon haſt thou to deny, or to delay? Haſt thou any reaſon that ſatisfieth thine own conſcience for it? Or any that thou dareſt own and plead at the bar of God? If thou haſt, let us hear them, bring them forth, and make them good. But, alas! what poor ſtuff, what nonſenſe inſtead of reaſons, do we daily hear from ungodly men! But for their neceſſity, I ſhould be aſhamed to name them.

1. One ſaith, "If none ſhall be ſaved but ſuch converted and ſanctified ones as you talk of, then heaven would be but empty, then God help a great many!"

Anſ. What! it ſeems you think that God doth not know, or elſe that he is not to be believed! Meaſure not all by yourſelves; God hath thouſands and millions of his ſanctified ones; but they are few in compariſon of the world, as Chriſt himſelf hath told us, *Matt.* vii. 13, 14. *Luke* xii. 32. It better beſeems you to make that uſe of this truth which Chriſt teacheth you: "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat," *Luke* xiii. 22, 23, 24.—"Fear not, little flock, (ſaith Chriſt to his ſanctified ones) for it is

your

your Father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom," *Luke* xii. 32.

Object. 2. I am ſure, if ſuch as I go to hell, we ſhall have ſtore of company.

Anſ. And will that be any eaſe or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company? Or Will you not believe that God will execute his threatnings, becauſe there be ſo many that are guilty? All theſe are ſilly unreaſonable conceits.

Object. 3. But are not all men ſinners, even the beſt of you all?

Anſ. But all are not unconverted ſinners. The godly live not in ſins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and ſtrive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

Object. 4. I do not ſee that profeſſors are any better than other men? they will overreach, and oppreſs, and are as covetous as any.

Anſ. Whatever hypocrites are, it is not ſo with thoſe that are ſanctified. God hath thouſands and ten thouſands that are otherwiſe; though the malicious world doth accuſe them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts. And commonly they charge them with heart ſins, which none can ſee but God; becauſe they can charge them with no ſuch wickedneſs in their lives as they are guilty of themſelves.

Object. 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppreſſor, and therefore why ſhouldeſt thou call me to be converted ?

Anſ. As if you were not born after the fleſh, and had not lived after the fleſh, as well as others ! Is it not as great a ſin as any of theſe, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving unhumbled heart ? Nay, let me tell you more ; that many perſons, that avoid diſgraceful ſins, are as faſt glued to the world, and as much ſlaves to the fleſh, and as ſtrange to God, and adverſe to heaven in their more civil diſcourſe, as others are in their more ſhameful and notorious ſins.

Object. 6. But I mean nobody any harm, nor do I any harm ; and why then ſhould God condemn me ?

Anſ. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou cameſt into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace that is daily offered thee ? It is the depth of thy ſinfulneſs to be inſenſible of it ; the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert made alive, thou wouldſt ſee more amiſs in thyſelf, and marvel at thyſelf for making ſo light of it.

Object. 7. I think you would make men mad under pretence of converting them ; it is enough to rack the brains of ſinful people, to muſe ſo much on matters too high for them.

Anſ.

Anſ. 1. Can you be madder than you are already? Or at leaſt, can there be a more dangerous madneſs than to neglect your everlaſting welfare, and wilfully undo yourſelves.

2. A man is never well in his wits till he be converted; he never knows God, nor knows ſin, nor knows Chriſt, nor knows the world, nor himſelf, nor what his buſineſs is on earth, ſo as to ſet himſelf about it, till he be converted.—The ſcripture ſaith, "That the wicked are unreaſonable men," *Theſſ.* iii. 2. and, "That the wiſdom of the world is fooliſhneſs with God," 1 Cor. i. 20. and *Luke* xv. 17. it is ſaid of the prodigal, that, "when he came to himſelf," he reſolved to return.—It is a wiſe world, when men will diſobey God, and run to hell for fear of being out of their wits.

3. What is there in the work that Chriſt calls you, that ſhould drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortable thinking of the glory to come, and the forſaking of our ſins, and loving one another, and delighting ourſelves in the ſervice of God? Are theſe ſuch things as ſhould make men mad?

4. And whereas you ſay that theſe matters are too high for us, you accuſe God himſelf for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be bleſſed to meditate on it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which

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we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make brutes of us, as if we were like them that muſt meddle with no higher matters than what belongs to fleſh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on and provide for, it will be too high for you ever to poſſeſs.

5. If God ſhould ſometimes ſuffer any weak-headed perſons to be diſtracted by thinking of eternal things; this is becauſe they miſunderſtand them, and run with out a guide; and, of the two, I had rather be in the caſe of ſuch a one, than of the mad unconverted world, that take their diſtraction to be their wiſdom.

Object. 8. I do not think that God cares ſo much what men think, or ſpeak, or do, as to make ſo great a matter of it.

Anſ. It ſeems, then, you take the word of God to be falſe, and then what will you believe? But your own reaſon might teach you better, if you believe not the ſcriptures: for you ſee God ſets not ſo light by us, but that he vouchſafeth to make us, and ſtill preſerved us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us; and will any wiſe man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock or watch, and daily look to it, and not care whether it go true or falſe? Surely, if you believe not a particular eye of providence obſerving your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular providence to

obſerve

obſerve your wants and troubles to relieve you. And, if God had ſo little cared for you as you imagine, you would never have lived till now ; a hundred diſeaſes would have ſtriven which ſhould firſt deſtroy you ; yea, the devils would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fiſhes devour the leſs, and as ravenous birds and beaſts devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or uſe ; and, if he made him for any, it was ſure for himſelf. And can you think he cares not whether his ends be accompliſhed, and whether we do the work that we are made for ?

Yea, by this atheiſtical objection, you make God to have made and upholden all the world in vain. For, what are all other lower creatures for, but for man ? What doth the earth, but bear and nouriſh us ? and the beaſts do ſerve us with their labours and lives : and ſo of the reſt. And hath God made ſo glorious a habitation, and ſet man to dwell in it, and made all his ſervants, and now doth he look for nothing at his hands ? nor care how he thinks, or ſpeaks, or lives ? This is moſt unreaſonble.

Object. 9. It was a better world when men did not make ſo much ado in religion.

Anſ. 1. It hathever been the cuſtom to praiſe the times paſt. That world, that you ſpeak of, was wont to ſay, it was a better world in their forefather's days, and ſo did they of their forefathers : this is but an old cuſtom, becauſe

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we all feel the evil of our own times, but we ſee not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you ſpeak as you think: worldlings think the world is at the beſt, when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have moſt mirth and worldly pleaſure. And I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would ſay, that then it was a better world, for then he had more ſervice and leſs diſturbance. But the world is at the beſt when God is moſt loved, regarded, and obeyed. And how elſe will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this?

Object. 10. There are ſo many ways and religions that we know not which to be of, and therefore we will even be as we are.

Anſ. Becauſe there are many, will you be of that way that you may be ſure is wrong? None are farther out of the way than worldly, fleſhly, unconverted ſinners; for, they do not only err in this or that opinion, but in the very ſcope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you ſtop or turn again, becauſe you met with ſome croſſways, or becauſe you ſaw ſome travellers go the horſe way, and ſome the foot way, and ſome perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and ſome miſs the way? or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have ſome ſervants that know not how to do your work right, and ſome that are unfaithful; would you take it well of any

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of the reſt that would therefore be idle, and do you no ſervice, becauſe they ſee the reſt do ſo bad?

Object. 11. I do not ſee that it goes any better with thoſe that are ſo godly than with other men; they are as poor, and in as much trouble as others.

Anſ. And perhaps in much more, when God ſees it meet. They take not earthly proſperity for their wages; they have laid up their treaſures and hopes in another world, or elſe they are not Chriſtians indeed. The leſs they have, the more is behind, and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 12. When you have ſaid all that you can, I am reſolved to hope well and truſt in God, and do as well as I can, and not make ſo much ado.

Anſ. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is againſt his holy and diligent ſervice? It is as well as you will indeed, but that is your miſery.

2. My deſire is, that you ſhould hope and truſt in God: but, for what is it that you would hope? Is it to be ſaved, if you turn and be ſanctified? For this you have God's promiſe, and, therefore hope for it, and ſpare not. But if you hope to be ſaved, without converſion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in Satan, or yourſelves; for God hath given you no ſuch promiſe, but told you the contrary;

contrary; but it is Satan, and ſelf love, that made you ſuch promiſes, and raiſed you to ſuch hopes.

Well, if theſe and ſuch as theſe be all you have to ſay againſt converſion and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worſe than nothing: and if theſe, and ſuch as theſe ſeem reaſon ſufficient to perſuade you to forſake God, and caſt yourſelves into hell, the Lord deliver you from ſuch reaſons, and from ſuch blind underſtandings, and from ſuch ſenſeleſs hardened hearts. Dare you ſtand to aver any one of theſe reaſons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then ſerve your turn to ſay, "Lord, I did not turn, becauſe I had ſo much to do in the world, or becauſe I did not like the lives of ſome profeſſors; or becauſe I ſaw men of ſo many minds?"—O how eaſily will the light of that day ſhame ſuch reaſoning as theſe? Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you ſerved now pay you your wages, and ſave you if it can. Had you not a better world to look after firſt? And were you not commanded, to "ſeek firſt God's kingdom and righteouſneſs; and promiſed that other things ſhould be added to you?" *Matt.* vi. 33. And were ye not told, "that godlineſs was profitable to all things, having the promiſe of this life and that which is to come?" 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. Did the ſins of profeſſors hinder you? You ſhould rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their fall to

beware

beware, and have been the more careful, and not the more careleſs. It was the Scripture, and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the World hinder you? Why the Scripture, that was your rule, did teach you but one way, and that was the right way; if you had followed that, even in ſo much as was plain and eaſy, you ſhould never have miſcarried. Will not ſuch anſwers as theſe ſilence you? If theſe will not, God hath thoſe that will; when he aſketh the man, *Matt.* xxiii. 12. "Friend, how comeſt thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" That is, what doſt thou in my church among profeſſed Chriſtians, without a holy heart and life? What anſwer did he make? Why the text ſaith, he was ſpeechleſs; he had nothing to ſay. The clearneſs of the caſe, and the Majeſty of God, will then eaſily ſtop the mouths of the moſt confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing we can ſay to you now; but will make good your cauſe, be it ever ſo bad. I know already, that never a reaſon that now you can give me will do you any good at laſt, when your caſe muſt be opened before the Lord and all the world.

Nay, I ſcarce think that your own conſciences are well ſatisfied with your reaſons. For, if they are, it ſeems then you have not ſo much as purpoſed to repent. But, if you purpoſe to repent, it ſeems you do not put

much confidence in your reaſons which you bring againſt it.

What ſay you, unconverted ſinners? Have you any good reaſon to give, why you ſhould not turn, and preſently turn with all your hearts? Or will you go to hell in deſpight of reaſon itſelf? Bethink you what you do in time, for it will ſhortly be too late to bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages? Is he a bad maſter? Is the devil, whom you ſerve, a better? Is the fleſh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldlineſs and ungodlineſs better? Do you think in your conſciences, that it would do you any harm to be converted and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the ſpirit of Chriſt within you? And to have a cleanſed purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God ſay, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 *Pet.* i. 15, 16. *Lev.* xx. 7. Is it evil to be like God? Is it not ſaid, "that God made man in his own image?" Why this holineſs is his image. This Adam loſt, and this Chriſt by his word and ſpirit would reſtore to you, as he doth to all that he will ſave. Why were you baptiſed into the Holy Ghoſt? and why do you baptiſe your children into the Holy Ghoſt as your ſanctifier, if you will not be ſanctified by him, but think it hard for you to be ſanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are lothe to live a holy life, had you not rather die

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in the case of those who do so than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man than of an unconverted? Of a holy and heavenly man than of a carnal earthly man? And would you not say, as Balaam, *Numb.* xxiii. 10. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last you must come to this, either to be converted, or wish you had been when it is too late.

But, what is it that you are afraid of losing if you turn? Is it your friends? you will but change them; God will be your friend, and Christ, and the Spirit, will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friend that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would have inticed you to hell; but could not have delivered you: But the friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasure that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again, if you once be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than to live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the

Holy

Holy Ghoſt, in which the ſtate of grace conſiſteth! *Rom.* xiv. 17. If it be a greater pleaſure to you to think of your lands and inheritance (if you were lords of all the country) than it is to a child to play for pins; why ſhould it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours than of all the riches or pleaſures of the world! As it is but fooliſh childiſhneſs that makes children ſo delight in toys that they would not leave them for all your land, ſo it is but fooliſh worldlineſs, fleſhlineſs, and wickedneſs, that make you ſo much delight in your houſes, and lands, and meat, and drink, and eaſe, and honour, as that you would not part with them for the heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleaſure when theſe are gone! Do you not think of that? When your pleaſures end in horror, and go out with a ſtinking ſnuff, the pleaſures of the ſaints are then at the beſt. I have had myſelf but a little taſte of the heavenly pleaſures in the forethoughts of the bleſſed approaching day, and in the preſent perſuaſions of the love of God in Chriſt; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleaſures, ſo that you may ſee, if I be partial, it is on your ſide; and yet I muſt profeſs, from that little experience, that there is no compariſon. There is more joy to be had in a day, (if the ſun of life ſhine clear upon us) in the ſtate of holineſs, than in a whole life of ſinful pleaſures. I had "rather be a doorkeeper in

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the houſe of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs," (*Pſalm* lxxxiv. 10.) "A day in his courts is better than a thouſand any where elſe," *Pſalm* lxxxiv. 13. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own miſery; and therefore Solomon ſaith of ſuch laughter, "it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it? *Eccleſ.* ii. 2. and *Eccleſ.* vii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. "It is better to go to the houſe of mourning than to go to the houſe of feaſting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the ſadneſs of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wiſe is in the houſe of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the houſe of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wiſe, than to hear the ſong of fools; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, ſo is the laughter of the fool." All the pleaſure of fleſhly things is but like the ſcratching of a man that hath the itch; it is his diſeaſe that makes him deſire it; and a wiſe man had rather be without his pleaſure than be troubled with his itch. Your loudeſt laughter is but like a man that is tickled; he laughs when he hath no cauſe of joy. Judge, as you are men, whether this be a wiſe man's part. It is but your carnal unſanctified nature that makes a holy life ſeem grievous to you, and a courſe of ſenſuality ſeem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Ghoſt will give you an-

other nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin than now it is to keep it; and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

Quest. But how cometh it to pass, that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have wit enough in other matters, what makes them so lothe to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Ans. To name them only in a few words, the causes are these:

1. Men are naturally in love with earth and flesh, and their nature hath an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man: And when all that we can say goeth against an hibitual inclination of their natures, no marvel if it little prevail.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things which they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light: But what will hearing do unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith; they know not the certainty and suitableness, and excellency, of the heavenly inheritance. They know

know not what converſion, and a holy mind and converſation, are, even when they hear of them. They are in a miſt of ignorance. They are loſt and bewildered in ſin; like a man that hath loſt himſelf in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himſelf again till the day light do recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident, that they need no converſion, but ſome partial amendment; but that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted when they are not. And, if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become ſlaves to their fleſh, and drowned in the world to make proviſion for it. Their luſts, and paſſions, and appetites, have diſtracted them, and got ſuch a hand over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing elſe. So that the drunkard ſaith, "I love a cup of good drink, and I cannot forbear it." The glutton ſaith, "I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear." The fornicator ſaith, "I love to have my luſt fulfilled, and I cannot forbear." And the gameſter loves to have his ſports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are become even captivated ſlaves to their fleſh, and their very wilfulneſs is become an impotency; and what they would not do,

they

they ſay they cannot. And the worldling is ſo taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart nor time for heavenly; but, as in Pharaoh's dream, *Gen.* xli. 4. "The lean kind did eat up the fat ones, ſo this lean and barren earth doth eat up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are ſo carried away by the ſtream of evil company, that they are poſſeſſed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them ſpeak againſt it; or at leaſt, they think they may venture to do as they ſee moſt do, and ſo they hold on in their ſinful ways; and when one is cut off and caſt into hell, and another ſnatched away from among them to the ſame condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, becauſe they ſee not whither they are gone. Poor wretches, they hold on in their ungodlineſs, for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In *Luke* xvi. the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, leſt they ſhould come to that place of torment. It is like, he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were haſting thither, and little dreamed that he was there, yea, and would little have believed one that ſhould have told them ſo. I remember a paſſage that a gentleman yet living told me that he ſaw upon a bridge over the Severn.* A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and ſomething meeting

* Mr. R. Rowley, of *Shrewſbury*, upon Acham Bridge.

ing them and hindering their paſſage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and, his legs ſliping from under him, he fell into the ſtream; the reſt ſeeing him, did one after one leap over the bridge, and were all, or almoſt all, drowned. Thoſe that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but, as ſoon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the caſe was altered. Even ſo it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the ſame way; and yet they will go after them, becauſe they think not whither they are gone. Oh but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they ſee what is on the other ſide of the wall, even in another world; then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, they have a ſubtile malicious enemy, that is unſeen of them, and plays his game in the dark; and it is his principal buſineſs to hinder their converſion, and therefore to keep them where they are, by perſuading them not to believe the Scriptures or not to trouble their minds with theſe matters; or by perſuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that it is more ado than needs, and that they may be ſaved without converſion, and without all this ſtir; and that God is ſo merciful, that he will not damn any ſuch as they;

or

or at leaſt, that they may ſtay a little longer, and take their pleaſure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter: And, by ſuch deluding cheats as theſe, the devil keeps the moſt in his captivity, and leadeth them to his miſery.

Theſe, and ſuch like impediments as theſe, do keep ſo many thouſands unconverted, when God hath done ſo much, and Chriſt hath ſuffered ſo much, and miniſters have ſaid ſo much, for their converſion; when their reſons are ſilenced, and they are not able to anſwer the Lord that calls after them, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" yet all comes to nothing with the greateſt part of them: and they leave us no more to do, after all, but to ſit down, and lament their wilful miſery.

SERMON IV.

EZEK. xxxiii. 11.

SAY UNTO THEM, AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD GOD, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE. TURN YE, TURN YE, FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?

I HAVE ſhewn you the reaſonableneſs of God's commands, and the unreaſonableneſs of wicked men's diſobedience.

If

If nothing will ſerve the turn, but men will yet refuſe to turn, we are next to conſider who it is long of if they be damned. And this brings me to the laſt doctrine, which is,

Doct. 7. *That if, after all, theſe men will not turn, it is not long of* God *that they are condemned, but of themſelves, even their own willfulneſs. They die, becauſe they will die; that is, becauſe they will not turn.*

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himſelf of your blood; it ſhall not lie on him if you be loſt. A negligent miniſter may draw it upon him; and thoſe that encourage you, or hinder you not in ſin, may draw it upon them; but, be ſure of it, it ſhall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord, concerning his unprofitable vineyard, *Iſaiah* v. 2, 3, 4. "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When he had planted it in a fruitful ſoil, and fenced it, and gathered out the ſtones, and planted it with the choiceſt vines," what ſhould he have done more to it? He hath made you men, and endowed you with reaſon; he hath furniſhed you with all external neceſſaries, he hath given you a righteous perfect law: when you had broken it, and undone yourſelves, he had pity on you, and ſent his Son by a miracle of condeſcending mercy to die for you, and be a ſacrifice for your ſins, and he "was in Chriſt reconciling

ciling the world to himſelf." The Lord Jeſus hath made you a deed of gift of himſelf, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it and return. He hath, on this reaſonable condition, offered you the free pardon of all your ſins; he hath written this in his word, and ſealed it by his Spirit, and ſent it you by his miniſters: they have made the offer to you, (many a time) and called you to accept it, and to turn to God. They have in his name intreated you, and reaſoned the caſe with you, and anſwered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and ſtaid your leiſure, and ſuffered you to abuſe him to his face. He hath mercifully ſuſtained you in the midſt of your ſins: he hath compaſſed you about with all ſorts of mercies: He hath alſo intermixed afflictions to mind you of your folly, and call you to your wits: and his ſpirit hath been often ſtriving with your hearts, and ſaying there, "Turn, ſinners, turn to him that calleth thee: whither art thou going? What art thou doing? Doſt thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies? When wilt thou let go all, and turn, and deliver up thyſelf to God, and give thy Redeemer the poſſeſſion of thy ſoul? When ſhall it once be?" Theſe pleadings have been uſed with thee: And when thou haſt delayed, thou haſt been urged to make haſte, and God hath called to thee, "To

day

day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart: Why not now without any more delay?" Life hath been ſet before you, the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the goſpel; the certainty of them have been manifeſted! the certainty of the everlaſting torments of the damned hath been declared to you. Unleſs you would have had a ſight of heaven and hell, what could you deſire more? Chriſt hath been, as it were, ſet forth crucified before your eyes, *Gal.* iii. 1. You have been a hundred times told that you are but loſt men until you come unto him. As oft as you have been told of the evil of ſin, of the vanity of the world, and all the pleaſures and wealth it can afford, or the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of your lives, and the endleſs duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this, have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, becauſe you have ſo often heard it, like the ſmith's dog, that is brought by cuſtom to ſleep under the noiſe of the hammers, and when the ſparks do fly about his ears; and, though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And, now let reaſon itſelf be judge, whether it belong of God or you, if after all this you will be unconverted and be damned? If you die now, it is becauſe you will die. What ſhould be

ſaid more to you? or what courſe ſhould be taken that is likely to prevail? Are you able to ſay, and make it good? "We would fain have been converted, and become new creatures, but we could not; we would fain have forſaken our ſins, but could not; we would have changed our company and our thoughts, and our diſcourſe, but we could not." Why could not you if you would? What hindered you, but the wickedneſs of your hearts? Who forced you to ſin? or who did hold you back from duty? Had not you the ſame teaching, and time, and liberty, to be godly, as your godly neighbours had? Why then could not you have been godly as well as they? Were the church doors ſhut againſt you? or did you not keep away yourſelves? or ſit and ſleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions againſt you in his word, when he invited ſinners to return; and when he promiſed mercy to thoſe that do return? Did he ſay, "I will pardon all that repent except thee?" Did he ſhut you out from the liberty of his holy worſhip? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forſook him and ran away yourſelves. And, when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promiſe and offer of mercy, or had ſaid to you, "Stand off, I will have nothing to do with ſuch as you;

pray

pray not to me, for I will not hear you; if you repent never ſo much, and cry for mercy never ſo much, I will not regard you." If God had left you nothing to truſt to but deſperation, then you had had a fair excuſe. You might have ſaid, "To what end ſhould I repent and turn, when it will do no good?" But this was not your caſe. You might have had Chriſt to be your Lord and Saviour, as well as others, and you would not; becauſe you felt not yourſelves ſick enough for the phyſician, and becauſe, you could not ſpare your diſeaſe: In your hearts you ſaid, as thoſe rebels, *Luke* xix. 14. "We will not have this man to reign over us." Chriſt, "would have gathered you under the wings of his ſalvation, and you would not," *Matt.* xxiii. 37. What deſires of your welfare did the Lord expreſs in his holy word; With what compaſſion did he ſtand over you and ſay, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways!" *Pſalm* lxxxi. 13. "O that there were ſuch a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" *Deut.* v. 20. "O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this! and that they would conſider their latter end!" *Deut.* xxxiii. 29. He would have been your God, and done all for you that your ſouls could well deſire; but you loved the world and your fleſh above

him,

him, and therefore you would not hearken to him; though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles, yet, when it came to the closing, "you would have none of him," *Psalm* lxxxi. 11, 12. No marvel, then, if he gave you up to your own lusts, and you walked in your own counsels." He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asketh you, "What is there in me or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hand? Many mercies have I shewn thee; for which of them dost thou thus despise me; Is it I, or is it Satan that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self, that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin, that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me, the Lord, that would have saved thee," *Jer.* ii. 17. "Doth not thy own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee, that thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken me?" *Jer.* ii. 19. "What iniquity have you found in me, that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?" *Jer.* ii. 5, 6. He calleth out as it were to the brutes, to hear the controversy he hath against you, *Micah* vi. 3, 4, 5. "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord God hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with

Israel.

Iſrael. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Teſtify againſt me, for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee, *&c.*" "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath ſpoken it. I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but Iſreal doth not know, my people doth not conſider! Ah, ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers, *&c.* *Iſaiah* i. 2, 3, 4. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Is not he thy father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and eſtabliſhed thee?" *Deut.* xxii. 6. When he ſaw that you forſook him even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment. *Iſaiah* lv. 1, 2, 3. "Wherefore do you ſpend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which ſatisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and come unto me: Hear and your ſoul ſhall live, and I will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even the ſure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him

return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," *ver.* 6, 7. and so *Isaiah* i. 16, 17, 18. And, when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulneſs and ſtubbornneſs! *Jer.* ii. 12, 13. "Be aſtoniſhed, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid! For, my people have committed two evils; they have forſaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out ciſterns, broken ciſterns, that can hold no water." Many a time hath Chriſt proclaimed that free invitation to you, *Rev.* xxii. 17. "Let him that is athriſt come, and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But you put him to complain after all his offers: "They will not come to me, that they may have life," *John* v. 40. He hath invited you to feaſt with him in the kingdom of his grace, and you have had excuſes from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly buſineſs; and, when you would not come, you have ſaid you could not; and provoked him to reſolve that you ſhould never taſte of his ſupper, *Luke* xiv. 15, 24. And who is it long of now but yourſelves? and what can we ſay is the chief cauſe of your damnation, but your own wills? you will be damned. The whole caſe is laid open by Chriſt himſelf, *Prov.* i. from the 20th to the end, "Wiſdom crieth without, ſhe uttereth her voice in the ſtreets, ſhe crieth in the chief

place

place of concourſe: how long, ye ſimple ones, will you love ſimplicity, and the ſcorners delight in their ſcorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my ſpirit unto you, and I will make known my words unto you. Becauſe I have called and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hands, and no man regarded, but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproofs; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind. When diſtreſs and anguiſh come upon you, then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer: they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counſel; they deſpiſed all my reproof: Therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For, the turning away of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them. But whoſo hearkeneth to me ſhall dwell ſafely, and ſhall be quiet from the fear of evil." I thought beſt to recite the whole text at large to you, becauſe it doth ſo fully ſhew the cauſe of the deſtruction of the world. It is not becauſe God would not teach them, but becauſe they would not learn. It is not becauſe God would not call them, but becauſe they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulneſs is their undoing.

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USE.

From what has been ſaid, you may further learn theſe following things:

1. From hence you may ſee, not only what blaſphemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of men's deſtruction upon God, but alſo how unfit theſe wicked wretches are to bring in ſuch a charge againſt their Maker. They cry out upon God, and ſay he gives them not grace, and his threatnings are ſevere, and God forbid that all ſhould be damned that be not converted and ſanctified: and they think it a hard meaſure that a ſhort ſin ſhould have an endleſs ſuffering; and if they be damned they ſay they cannot help it; when in the mean time they are buſy about their own deſtruction, even cutting the throat of their own ſouls, and will not be perſuaded to hold their hands. They think God were cruel if he ſhould damn them; and yet they are ſo cruel to themſelves, that they will run into the fire of hell; when God hath told them it is a little before them, and neither intreaties, nor any thing that can be ſaid, will ſtop them. We ſee them almoſt undone; their careleſs, worldly, fleſhly lives do tell us, that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot ſave them; and knowing the uucertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day leſt they drop into the fire. And, therefore, we intreat them to pitty their own ſouls, and not to undo themſelves

ſelves when mercy is at hand; and they will not hear us. We intreat them to caſt away their ſin, and come to Chriſt without delay, and to have ſome mercy on themſelves; but they will have none. And yet they think that God muſt be cruel if he condemn them. O wilful miſerable ſinners! It is not God that is cruel to you; it is you that are cruel to yourſelves. You are told that you muſt turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told, that if you will needs keep your ſins, you ſhall keep the curſe of God with them; and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happineſs but by holineſs; and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God ſay more to you? What would you have him to do with his mercy? He offereth it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of ſin and miſery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuſe his help: he would cleanſe you of your ſins, and you had rather keep them. You love your luſt, and you love your gluttony, and ſports, and drunkenneſs, and will not let them go. Would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him bring you and your ſins to heaven together? Why, that is an impoſſibility: You may as well expect he ſhould turn the ſun into darkneſs. What! an unſanctified fleſhly heart to be in heaven! it cannot be. "There entereth nothing that

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is unclean," *Rev.* xxi. 17. "For what communication hath light to darkneſs, or Chriſt with Belial?" 2 *Cor.* vi. 14, 15. "All the day long hath he ſtretched out his hands to a diſobedient and gainſaying people," *Rom.* x. 25. What will ye do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourſelves, and you will not. Miniſters ſee the poiſoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him, "There is poiſon in it, and deſire him to have mercy on his ſoul and forbear? and he will not hear us: drink it he muſt and will; he loves it; and therefore, though hell come next, he ſaith he cannot help it. What ſhould one ſay to ſuch men as theſe? We tell the ungodly careleſs worldling, it is not ſuch a life that will ſerve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace, and, when the curſe of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, will you not ſtir, but aſk, What needs all this ado? Is an immortal ſoul of no more worth? Oh! have mercy upon yourſelves! But they will have no mercy on themſelves, nor once regard us. We tell them, the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with everlaſting fire? And yet they will have no mercy upon themſelves. And yet will theſe poor wretches ſay, that God is more merciful than to condemn them, when it is themſelves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation; and if we ſhould go

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to them, and intreat them, we cannot ſtop them. If we ſhould fall down on our knees to them, we cannot ſtop them; but to hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them, for the ſake of God that made them, and preſerveth them, for the ſake of Chriſt, that died for them; for the ſake of their own poor ſouls, to pity themſelves, and go no farther in the way to hell, but come to Chriſt while his arms are open, and enter into the ſtate of life while the door ſtands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had; they will not be perſuaded. If we ſhould die for it, we cannot get them ſo much as now and then to conſider with themſelves of the matter, and turn. And yet they can ſay, "I hope God will be merciful." Did you never conſider what he ſaith, *Iſaiah* xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no underſtanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will ſay he is unmerciful. If he ſhould caſt you into a priſon, or beat or torment you, you would ſay he is unmerciful. And yet you will do a thouſand times more againſt yourſelves, even caſt away both ſoul and body forever, and never complain of your own unmercifulneſs. Yea, and God, that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, muſt be taken to be unmerciful if he puniſh

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you after all this. Unleſs the Holy God of heaven will give theſe wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to ſpit in his face, and do deſpite to the ſpirit of grace, and make a jeſt of ſin, and a mock at holineſs, and ſet more light by ſaving mercy than by the filth of their fleſhly pleaſures; and unleſs, after all this, he will ſave them by the mercy which they caſt away, and would none of; God himſelf muſt be called unmerciful by them. But he will be juſtified when he judgeth, and he will not ſtand or fall at the bar of a ſinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them againſt the Lord; but I ſhall not here ſtay to anſwer them particularly, having done it already in my *Treatiſe of Judgment*, to which I ſhall refer them. Had the diſputing part of the world been as careful to avoid ſin and deſtruction as they have been buſy in ſearching after the cauſe of them, and forward directly to impute it to God, they might have exerciſed their wits more profitably, and have leſs wronged God, and ſped better themſelves. When ſo ugly a monſter as ſin is within us, and ſo heavy a thing as puniſhment is on us, and ſo dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it would be an eaſy queſtion, who is in the fault, and whether God or man be the principal or culpable cauſe? Some men are ſuch favourable judges of themſelves, that they

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are proner to accuſe the infinite perfection and goodneſs itſelf than their own hearts, and imitate their firſt parents, that ſaid, "The ſerpent tempted me, and the woman that thou gavſt me gave unto me, and I did eat;" —ſecretly implying that God was the cauſe. So ſay they, "the underſtanding that thou gaveſt me was unable to diſcern; the will that thou geaveſt me was unable to make better choice; the objects which thou didſt ſet before me did entice me; the temptation which thou didſt permit to aſſault me prevailed againſt me." And ſome are ſo lothe to think that God can make a ſelf-determinate creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative to be the determiner of the will in every ſin, as the firſt officient immediate phyſical cauſe.—And many would be content to acquit God from ſo much cauſing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cauſe of good: as if truths would be no longer truths if we are unable to ſee them in their perfect order and coherence; becauſe our ravelled wits cannot ſet them right together, nor aſſign each truth its proper place, we preſume to conclude that ſome muſt be caſt away. This is the fruit of proud ſelf-conceitedneſs: when men receive not God's truth as a child his leſſon, in a holy ſubmiſſion to the omniſcience of our teacher, but as cenſurers that are too wiſe to learn.

Object. But we cannot convert ourſelves till God convert us: We can do nothing without his grace: It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that ſheweth mercy.

Anſ. God hath two degrees of mercy to ſhew; the mercy of converſion firſt, and the mercy of ſalvation laſt: The latter he will give to none but thoſe that will turn and run, and hath promiſed it to them only. The former is to make them willing that are unwilling; and though your own willingneſs and endeavours deſerve not his grace, yet your wilful deſerveth that it ſhould be denied to you. Your diſability is your very unwillingneſs itſelf, which excuſeth not your ſin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn if you were but truly willing; and, if your wills themſelves are ſo corrupted, that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cauſe to ſeek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the uſe of means, and not neglect it, or ſet againſt it. Do what you are able firſt, and then complain of God for denying you grace if you have cauſe.

Object. But you ſeem to intimate all this while that man hath free-will.

Anſ. The diſpute about free-will is beyond your capacity. I ſhall therefore now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a ſelf-determining,

mining, faculty, but it is viciouſly inclined, and backward to do good; and therefore we ſee, by ſad experience, that it hath not a virtuous moral freedom. But that is the wickedneſs of it which deſerveth the puniſhment. And I pray you let us not befool ourſelves with opinions. Let the caſe be your own. If you had an enemy ſo malicious, that he falls upon you, and beats you every time he meats you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuſe him, becauſe he ſaith, "I have not free-will, it is my nature; I cannot chuſe, unleſs God gives me grace." If you have a ſervant that robbeth you, will you take ſuch an anſwer from him? Might not every thief and murderer, that is hanged at the aſſize, give ſuch an anſwer? "I have not free-will; I cannot change my own heart! What can I do without God's grace?" And ſhall they therefore be acquitted? If not, why then ſhould you think to be acquitted for a courſe of ſin againſt the Lord?

2. From hence alſo you may obſerve theſe three things together. 1. What a ſubtile tempter Satan is. 2. What a deceitful thing ſin is. 3. What a fooliſh creature corrupted man is. A ſubtile temper indeed, that can perſuade the greateſt part of the world to go wilfully into everlaſting fire, when they have ſo many warnings and diſſuaſives as they have. A deceitful thing is ſin indeed, that can bewitch ſo many thouſands to part with everlaſting

laſting life, for a thing ſo baſe and utterly unworthy! A fooliſh creature is man indeed, that will be cheated of his ſalvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impoſſible, that any man in his wits ſhould be perſuaded, for a trifle, to caſt himſelf into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the deſtruction of his life. And yet men will be enticed to caſt themſelves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you ſhould not die till you ſhould kill yourſelves, how long would moſt of you live? And yet, when your everlaſting life is ſo far in your own hands under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourſelves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing? Ah! what ſilly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is ſin!

3. From hence alſo you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into ſin, and keep them in it! Can you expect that they ſhould have any mercy on others, that have none upon themſelves? and that they ſhould ſo much ſtick at the deſtruction of others, that ſtick not to deſtroy themſelves? They do no worſe by others than they do by themſelves.

4. Laſtly, you may hence learn, that the greateſt enemy to man is himſelf; and the

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greateſt judgment in this life, that can befal him, is to be left to himſelf; and that the great work, that grace hath to do, is to ſave us from ourſelves; and the greateſt accuſations and complaints of men ſhould be againſt themſelves; and that the greateſt work that we have to do ourſelves, is to reſiſt ourſelves; and the greateſt enemy that we ſhould daily pray, and watch, and ſtrive againſt, is our own carnal hearts and wills; and the greateſt part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to ſave them from themſelves, even from their own blind underſtandings, and corrupted wills, and perverſe affections, and violent paſſions, and unruly ſenſes; I only name all theſe for brevity ſake; and leave them to your farther conſideration.

Well, Sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of ſouls, (even mens' ſelves, their own wills) what remains but that you judge according to the evidence, and confeſs this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do ſo no more? To theſe there ends diſtinctly, I ſhall add a few words more.—1. Farther to convince you. 2. To humble you. And 3. To reform you, if there be yet any hope.

1. We know ſo much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is ſo willing to do good, and delighteth to ſhew mercy, that we have no reaſon to ſuſpect him of being

the culpable cauſe of our death, or to call him cruel: he made all good, and he preſerveth and maintaineth all; the eyes of all things do wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due ſeaſon; he openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſires of all the living, *Pſal.* cxlv. 15, 16. He is not only "righteous in all his ways (and therefore will deal juſtly) and holy in all his works, (and therefore not the author of ſin) but he is alſo good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," *Pſalm* cxlv. 17, 19.

But, as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverſe, his affections carry him ſo headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to ſuch a work as the deſtroying of himſelf. If you ſaw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you ſooner ſuſpect the ſheep, or the dog or wolf, to be the author of it, if they both ſtand by? Or, if you ſee a houſe broken, and the people murdered, would you ſooner ſuſpect the prince, or judge, that is wiſe and juſt, and had no need; or a known thief or murderer? I ſay therefore as *James* i. 13, 14, 15. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (to draw him to ſin) but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then, when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin, and ſin when it is finiſhed, bringeth

forth

forth death. You ſee here, that ſin is the brat of your own concupiſcence, and not to be fathered on God ; and that death is the offspring of your own ſin, and the fruit which it will yield you as ſoon as ripe. You have a treaſure of evil in yourſelves, as a ſpider hath poiſon, whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourſelves, and ſpinning ſuch webs as entangle your own ſouls. Your nature ſhews it is you that are the cauſe.

2. It is evident, that you are your own deſtroyers, in that you are ſo ready to entertain any temptation almoſt that is offered you. Satan is ſcarce readier to move you to any evil than you are ready to hear and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your underſtanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good reſolutions, it is ſoon done. If he would cool any good deſires or affections, it is ſoon done. If he would kindle any luſt, or vile affections, or deſires, in you, it is ſoon done. If he will put you on to evil thoughts, or deeds, you are ſo free, that he needs not rod or ſpur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little doth it, you need no curb. You examine not his ſuggeſtions, nor reſiſt them with any reſolution ; nor caſt them out as he caſts them in, nor quench the ſparks which he endeavoureth to kindle ; but you ſet in with him, and meet him half-way, and

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embrace his notions, and tempt him to tempt you. And, it is eaſy to catch ſuch greedy fiſh, that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your deſtruction is evidently long of yourſelves, in that you reſiſt all that would help to ſave you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourſelves. God would help and ſave you by his word, and you reſiſt it; it is too ſtrict for you. He would ſanctify you by his Spirit, and you reſiſt and quench it. If any man reprove you for your ſin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your preſent danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himſelf, he ſhall not anſwer for you; or elſe, at beſt, you put him off with a heartleſs thank, and will not turn when you are perſuaded. If miniſters would privately inſtruct and help you, you yill not come at them; your unhumbled ſouls do feel but little need of their help. If they would catechiſe you, you are too old to be catechiſed, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can ſay to you for your good, you are ſo ſelf conceited and wiſe in your own eyes, (even in the depth of ignorance) that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your preſent conceits; but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiſer than they; you reſiſt all that they can ſay to you, by your ignorance,

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and wilfulneſs, and fooliſh cavils, and ſhifting evaſions, and unthankful rejections; ſo that no good that is offered can find any welcome acceptance and entertainment with you.

4. Moreover it is apparent that you are ſelf deſtroyers, in that you draw the matter of your ſin and deſtruction even from the bleſſed God himſelf. You like not the contrivance of his wiſdom; you like not his juſtice, but take it for cruelty; you like not his holineſs, but are ready to think he is ſuch a one as yourſelves, *Pſalm* l. 21. and make as light of ſin as you; you like not his truth, but would have his threatnings, even his peremtory threatnings prove falſe. And his goodneſs, which you ſeem moſt highly to approve, you partly reſiſt, as it would lead you to repentance, and partly abuſe, to the ſtrengthening of your ſin, as if you might freely ſin, becauſe God is merciful, and becauſe his grace doth ſo much abound.

5. Yea, you fetch deſtruction from the bleſſed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himſelf. And nothing more emboldeneth you in ſin than that Chriſt hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you may boldly venture: As if Chriſt were become a ſervant to Satan and your ſins, and muſt wait upon you while you are abuſing him; and becauſe he is become the phyſician of ſouls, and is able to ſave to the utmoſt all that come to God by him, you

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think he muſt ſuffer you to refuſe his help and throw away his medicines, and muſt ſay you whether you will come to God by him or not; ſo that a great part of your ſins are occaſioned by your bold preſumption upon the death of Chriſt.

Not conſidering that he came to redeem his people from their ſins, and to ſanctify them a peculiar people to himſelf, and to confirm them in holineſs to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head, *Matt.* i. 21. *Tit.* ii. 14. 1 *Pet.* i. 15, 16. *Col.* iii. 10, 11. *Phil.* ii. 9, 10.

6. You alſo fetch your own deſtruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal foreknowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your ſin, or poſſeſs your mind with quarrelling thoughts as if his decrees might ſpare you the labour of repentance and a holy life, or elſe were the cauſe of your ſin and death. If he afflict you you repine; if he proſper you, you the more forget him, and are the backwarder to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked proſper, you forget the end that will ſet all reckoning ſtrait; and are ready to think it is as good to be wicked as godly. And thus you draw your death from all.

7. And the like you do from the creature and mercies of God to you. He giveth them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture of his ſervice, and you turn them againſt him

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to the pleaſing of your fleſh. You eat and drink to pleaſe your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you for his work. Your clothes you abuſe to pride. Your riches draw your heart from heaven, *Phil.* iii. 18. Your honours and applauſe do puff you up: If you have wealth and ſtrength, it makes you more ſecure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abuſed by you to your hurt. If you ſee their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you ſee their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are ſtirred up to luſt. And it is well if godlineſs be not an eye ſore to you.

8. The very gifts that God beſtoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath inſtituted for his church, you turn to ſin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and ſelf conceited: If you have but common gifts, you take them for ſpecial grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for ſo good a work, as if it would excuſe you for not obeying it. Your prayers are ſo turned into ſin, becauſe you regard iniquity in your hearts, *Pſalm* lxvi. 18. "And depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord," 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. "Your prayers are abominable, becauſe you turn away your ear from hearing the law," *Prov.* xxviii. 9. "And are more ready to offer the ſacrifice of fools (thinking you do God ſome ſpecial ſervice)

vice) than to hear his word and obey it," *Eccles.* v. 1.

9. Yea, the persons you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them. If they live ungodly, you imitate them. If the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them. If the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise: if one of them fall in a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because that others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks, because some others have by heedlessness sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, *they are alike*, and think yourselves as honest. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but, because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And, if we could draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven years custom, you are as much

offended

offended with a motion for reformation as if you were to loſe your lives by it, and hold faſt *old* errors whilſt you cry out againſt *new* ones. Scarce a difference can ariſe among the miniſters of the goſpel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at leaſt not obey, the unqueſtionable doctrine of any of thoſe that jump not with your conceits. *One* will not hear a miniſter becauſe he ſaith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him becauſe he doth not uſe it. One will not hear them that are for Epiſcopacy, and another will not hear them that are againſt it. And, thus I might ſhew it you in many other caſes, how you turn all that come near you to your own deſtruction; ſo clear is it that the ungodly are ſelf-deſtroyers, and that their perdition is of themſelves.

Methinks now, upon the conſideration of what is ſaid, and the review of your own ways, you ſhould bethink you what you have done, and be aſhamed and deeply humbled to remember it. If you be not, I pray you conſider theſe following truths.

1. To be your own deſtroyers is to ſin againſt the deepeſt principle in your natures, even the principle of ſelf-preſervation. Every thing naturally deſireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection. And will you ſet yourſelves to your own deſtruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourſelves, it is ſuppoſed that

you naturally love yourſelves. But, if you love your neighbours no better than yourſelves, it ſeems you would have all the world be damned.

2. How extremely do you croſs your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it. You think you are but doing good to yourſelves, by gratifying the deſires of your fleſh: but, alas! it is but a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the ſcratching of an itching wild fire, which increaſeth the diſeaſe and pain. If indeed you will have pleaſure, or profit, or honour, ſeek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it, that you ſhould do that againſt yourſelves, which none elſe in earth or hell can do! if all the world were combined againſt you, or all the devils in hell were combined againſt you, they could not deſtroy you without yourſelves, nor make you ſin but by your own conſent. And will you do that againſt yourſelves, which no one elſe can do! You have hateful thoughts of the devil, becauſe he is your enemy, and endeavoureth your deſtruction. And will you be worſe than devils to yourſelves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to underſtand it, when you run into ſin, and run from godlineſs, and refuſe to turn at the call of God, you do more againſt your own ſouls than men or devils

could

could do beſides. And, if you ſhould ſet yourſelves and bend your wits to do yourſelves the greateſt miſchief, you could not deviſe to do a greater.

4. You are falſe to the truſt that God hath repoſed in you. He hath much entruſted you with your own ſalvation; and will you betray your truſt? He hath ſet you with all diligence to keep your hearts? and is this the keeping of them? *Prov.* iv. 23.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you when you will have no pity on yourſelves. If you cry to God in the day of your calamity, for *mercy*, *mercy*; what can you expect but that he ſhould thruſt you away, and ſay, "Nay, thou wouldſt not have mercy on thyſelf: Who brought this upon thee but thy own wilfulneſs?" And, if your brethren ſee you everlaſtingly in miſery, how ſhall they pity you, that were your own deſtroyers, and would not be diſſuaded.

6. It will everlaſtingly make you your own tormentors in hell to think on it, that you brought yourſelves wilfully to that miſery. O what a torturing thought it will be for ever to think with yourſelves that this was your own doing! That you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do! That you wilfully ſinned, and wilfully turned away from God! That you had time as well as others, but you abuſed it! That you had teachers as well as others, but you

refuſed

refuſed their inſtructions! You had holy examples, but you did not imitate them. You were offered Chriſt, and grace, and glory, as well as others; but you had more mind of your fleſhly pleaſure. You had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out, *Prov.* xvii. 16. Can it chuſe but torment you to think of this your preſent folly? O that your eyes were opened, to ſee what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own ſouls! and that you better underſtood thoſe words of God, *Prov.* viii. 33, 34, 35, 36. "Hear inſtruction and be wiſe, and refuſe it not: Bleſſed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the poſts of my doors: For, whoſo findeth me findeth life, and ſhall obtain the favour of the Lord: But he that ſinneth againſt me wrongeth his own ſoul: All they that hate me love death."

And now I am come to the concluſion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I ſhall leave, leſt after this the fleſh ſhould ſtill deceive you, and the world and the devil ſhould keep you aſleep, and I ſhould leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell: though in care of your poor ſouls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obſtinacy of a carnal heart: Yet I can ſay, with the prophet *Jeremiah*, xvii. 16. "I have not deſired the woeful day, the Lord knoweth:" I have not with *James* and *John* deſired that "fire might come from heaven"

heaven" to conſume them that refuſe Jeſus Chriſt, (*Luke* ix. 54) but it is the preventing the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavouring! And O that it had been a needleſs work! That God and conſcience might have been as willing to ſpare me this labour as ſome of you could have been!—Dear friends! I am ſo lothe you ſhould lie in everlaſting fire, and be ſhut out of heaven, if it be poſſible to prevent it, that I ſhall once more aſk you, what do you now reſolve? Will you turn or die? I look upon you as a phyſician upon his patient in a dangerous diſeaſe, that ſaith to him, "Though you are far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but theſe few things that are hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life: but, if you will not do this, you are but a dead man."—What would you think of ſuch a man, if the phyſician, and all the friends he hath, cannot perſuade him to take one medicine to ſave his life, or to forbear one or two poiſonous things that would kill him?—This is your caſe. As far as you are gone in ſin, do but now turn and come to Chriſt, and take his remedies, and your ſouls ſhall live: Caſt up your deadly ſins by repentance, and turn not to the poiſonous vomit any more, and you ſhall do well. But yet if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you: Though you would not conſent, you might be held or bound, while the medicine were poured down

your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you: But about your ſouls it cannot be ſo; we cannot convert you againſt your wills: There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters, you may be condemned againſt your wills, becauſe you ſinned with your wills; but you cannot be ſaved againſt your wills. The wiſdom of God hath thought meet to lay men's ſalvation or deſtruction exceedingly much upon the choice of their own wills; that no man ſhall come to heaven, that chooſes not the way to heaven, and no man ſhall come to hell, but ſhall be forced to ſay, "I have the thing I choſe, my own will did bring me hither."—Now if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and reſolvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done. And, alas! muſt we loſe our friends, and muſt they loſe their God, their happineſs, their ſouls, for want of this? Oh! God forbid! It is a ſtrange thing to me, that men are ſo inhuman and ſtupid in the greateſt matters, that in leſs things are very civil and courteous, and good neighbours. For ought I know, I have the love of all, or almoſt all my neighbours, ſo far, that if I ſhould ſend to any man in the town, or pariſh, or country, and requeſt a reaſonable courteſy of them, they would grant it me; and when I come to requeſt of them the greateſt matter in the world for themſelves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them

but

but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good ſadneſs or not, and means as he ſpeaks: for I think I have few neighbours, but, if I were ſitting familiarly with them, and telling them of what I have ſeen, or done, or known in the world, they would believe me, and regard what I ſay: But when I tell them, from the infallible word of God, what they themſelves ſhall ſee and know in the world to come, they ſhew by their lives that they do either not believe it, or not much regard it. If I meet ever a one of them on the way, and told them, yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quickſand, or there are thieves lie in wait for you, I could perſuade them to turn by: But, when I tell them that Satan lieth in wait for them, and that ſin is poiſon to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jeſted with, they go on as if they did not hear me.—Truly, neighbours, I am in as good earneſt with you in the pulpit as I am in any familiar diſcourſe, and, if ever you will regard me, I beſeech you let it be here: I think there is never a man of you all, but, if my own ſoul lay at your wills, you would be willing to ſave it, (tho' I cannot promiſe that you would leave your ſins for it.) Tell me, thou drunkard, art thou ſo cruel to me that ſpeaks to thee, that thou wouldſt not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou kneweſt it would ſave my ſoul from hell? Hadſt thou rather I did burn there forever, than thou ſhouldſt

live.

live ſoberly as other men do ? If ſo, may I not ſay thou art an unmerciful monſter, and not a man ? if I come hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me ? I am confident you would ; if it were to ſave my life, I know you would (ſome of you) hazard your own. And yet, will you not be intreated to part with your ſenſual pleaſures for your own ſalvation ? Wouldeſt thou forbear a hundred cups of drink, man, to ſave my life, if it were in thy power, and wilt thou not do it to ſave thy own ſoul ? I profeſs to you, Sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day, for the ſaving of your own ſouls, as I would be for my own ſupply, if I were forced to come begging to your own doors. And, therefore, if you would hear me then, hear me now : if you would pity me then, be intreated now to pity yourſelves. I do again beſeech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and *turn, that you may live*.--All you that have lived in ignorance, careleſſneſs, and preſumption, to this day ; all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind for God and eternal glory ; all you that are enſlaved to your fleſhly deſires of meats and drink, ſports and luſts ; and all you that know not the neceſſity of holineſs, and never were acquainted with the ſanctifying work of the Holy Ghoſt upon your ſouls ; that never embraced your bleſſed

Redeemer

Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehenſions of his love, and that never felt a higher eſtimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them than to your fleſhly proſperity and the things below: I earneſtly beſeech you, not only for my ſake, but for the Lord's ſake and for your ſoul's ſake, that you go not one day longer in your former condition, but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may eſcape the plagues that are a little before you. And, if ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this requeſt, to turn from your evil ways and live. Deny me any thing that ever I ſhall aſk you for myſelf, if you will but grant me this. And if you deny me this, I care not for any thing elſe that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you would do any thing at the requeſt of the Lord that made you and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you ſhall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requeſts, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his requeſt now in the day of your proſperity. O believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they ſeem to carnal eyes afar off. Then you would hear

ſuch a meſſage as I bring you with more awakened regarding hearts.

Well, tho' I cannot hope ſo well of all, I will hope that ſome of you are by this time purpoſing to turn and live, and that you are ready to aſk me, as the Jews did *Peter*, *Acts* ii. 37. when they were pricked in their hearts, and ſaid, "Men and brethren, what ſhall we do? How might we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we ſhould chooſe deſtruction, by refuſing converſion, as hitherto we have done." If theſe be the thoughts and purpoſes of your hearts, I ſay of you as God did of a promiſing people, *Deut.* v. 28, 29. "They have well ſaid all that they have ſpoken: O that there were ſuch a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" Your purpoſes are good. O that there were but a heart in you to perform theſe purpoſes! And, in hope thereof, I ſhall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the eaſier remember it for your practice.

DIRECTION I.

IF you will be converted and ſaved, labour to underſtand the neceſſity and true nature of converſion; for what, and from what, and to what, and by what, it is that you muſt turn.

Conſider

Conſider in what a lamentable condition you are till the hour of your converſion, that you may feel it is not a ſtate to be reſted in. You are under the guilt of all the ſins that ever you committed; and under the wrath of God, and the curſe of his law; you are bond-ſlaves to the devil, and daily employed in his works, againſt the Lord, yourſelves, and others; you are ſpiritually dead and deformed, as being void of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleaſing unto God. You are without any promiſe or aſſurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his juſtice, not knowing what hour you may be ſnatched away to hell, and moſt certain to be damned if you die in that condition. And nothing ſhort of converſion can prevent it. Whatever civilities, or amendments, or virtues, are ſhort of true converſion, will never procure the ſaving of your ſouls. Keep the true ſenſe of this natural miſery, and ſo of the neceſſity of converſion on your hearts.

And then you muſt underſtand what it is to be converted: it is to have a new heart or diſpoſition, and a new converſion.

Queſt. 1. For what muſt you turn?

Anſ. For theſe ends following, which you may attain: 1. You ſhall immediately be made living members of Chriſt, and have an intereſt in him, and be renewed after the image of God,

and

and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have the liberty to call him Father and go to him by prayer, in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guid you; you shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers, of the saints; you shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful and a blessing to the place where you live, and shall have the promise of this life and that which is to come. You shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear; you may have some taste of the communion with God in the spirit, espcially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your souls; you shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee by faith the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace: and you shall never be so low, but your happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive.

And

And then, 2. At death your ſouls ſhall go to Chriſt, and at the day of judgment both ſoul and body ſhall be juſtified and glorified, and enter into your Maſter's joy; where your happineſs will conſiſt in theſe particulars.

1. You ſhall be perfected yourſelves:---Your mortal bodies ſhall be made immortal, and the corruptible ſhall put on incorruption: you ſhall no more be hungry or thirſty, or weary, or ſick; nor ſhall you need to fear either ſhame, or ſorrow, or death, or hell. Your ſouls ſhall be perfectly freed from ſin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, and love, and praiſes of the Lord.

2. Your employments ſhall be to behold your glorious Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven; and to ſee the glory of the moſt bleſſed God, and to love him perfectly, and be beloved by him, and to praiſe him everlaſtingly.

Your glory will contribute to the glory of the New Jeruſalem, the city of the living God; which is more than to have a private felicity to yourſelves.

4. Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlaſtingly be magnified and pleaſed in you that are the travail of his ſoul; and this is more than the glorifying of yourſelves.

5. And, the eternal Majeſty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory; both as he is magnified by your praiſes, and as he

communicateth of his glory and goodneſs to you, and as he is pleaſed in you, and in the accompliſhment of his glorious work, in the glory of the New Jeruſalem, and of his Son.

All this, the pooreſt begger of you, that is converted ſhall certainly and endleſsly enjoy.

2. You ſee *for* what you muſt turn: Next you muſt underſtand *from* what you muſt turn: and that is, in a word, from your carnal ſelf, which is the end of all the unconverted. From the fleſh that would be pleaſed before God, and would ſtill be enticing you thereto. From the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for ſouls, and the deceiver. And ſo from all known and wilful ſins.

3. Next you muſt know *to what* end you muſt turn; and that is, to God as your end, to Chriſt as the way to the Father; to holineſs, as the way appointed you by Chriſt, and to the uſe of all the helps and means of grace afforded you by the Lord.

4. Laſtly, you muſt know *by what* you muſt turn: and that is, by Chriſt, as the only Redeemer and interceſſor; and by the Holy Ghoſt, as the ſanctifier; and by the Word, as his inſtrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of neceſſity.

Direct.

Direct. II. If you will be converted and saved, be much in secret serious conversation. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves often into retired secrecy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made; of the life you have lived; the time you have lost; the sin you have committed; of the love and sufferings, and fulness of Christ; of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; and of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell; and eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Steep your hearts in such considerations as these.

Direct. III. If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God which is the ordinary means. Read the scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it: constantly attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone without it, so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world. *Acts* xxvi. 17, 18. *Matt.* v. 14. When he had miraculously humbled *Paul*, he sendeth him to *Ananias*, *Acts* ix. 10. And, when he hath sent an angel to *Cornelius*, it is but to bid him send for *Peter*, who is to tell him what he is to believe and do.

Direct.

Direct. IV. "Betake yourſelves to God in a courſe of earneſt conſtant prayer. Confeſs and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beſeech him to pardon what is paſt, and to give you his ſpirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and ſave you from temptations. And ply this work daily, and be not weary of it.

Direct. V. "Preſently give over your known and wilful ſins. Make a ſtand, and go that way no farther."—Be drunk no more, but avoid the place and occaſion of it. Caſt away your luſts and ſinful pleaſures with deteſtation, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, reſtore as *Zaccheus* did. If you will commit again your old ſins, what bleſſings can you expect on the means for converſion?

Direct. VI. "Preſently, if poſſible, change your company, if it have hitherto been bad." Not by forſaking your neceſſary relations, but your unneceſſary ſinful companions, and join yourſelves with thoſe that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven, *Acts* ix. 19, 26. *Pſalm* xv. 4.

Direct. VII. "Deliver up yourſelves to the Lord Jeſus as the phyſician of your ſouls," that he may pardon you by his blood, and ſanctify you by his ſpirit, by his word, and miniſters, the inſtruments of the ſpirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is

no

no coming to the Father but by him, *John* xiv. 6. "Nor is there any other name under heaven by which you can be saved." *Acts* iv. 12. Study therefore his perſon and nature, and what he hath done and ſuffered for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full ſupply of all your neceſſities.

Direct. VIII. If you mean indeed to turn and live, "Do it ſpeedily, without delay." If you are not willing to turn to day, you are not willing to do it at all.—Remember you are all this while in your blood, under the guilt of many thouſand ſins, and under God's wrath, and you ſtand at the very brink of hell; there is but a ſtep between you and death. And this is not a caſe for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore preſently, and fly as for your lives; as you would be gone out of your houſe, if it were all on fire over your heads.—O if you did but know what continual danger you live in, and what daily unſpeakable loſs you do ſuſtain, and what a ſafer and ſweeter life you might live, you would not ſtand trifling, but preſently turn. Multitudes miſcarry that wilfully delay, when they are convinced that it muſt be done. Your lives are ſhort and uncertain; and what a caſe are ye in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have ſtaid too long already, and wronged God too long; ſin getteth ſtrength and rooting while you delay. Your

converſion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the laſt, leſt God forſake you, and give you up to yourſelves, and then you are undone for ever.

Direct. IX. If you will turn and live, do it "unreſervedly, abſolutely, and univerſally." Think not to capitulate with Chriſt, and divide your heart betwixt him and the world, and to part with ſome ſins, and keep the reſt; and to let go that which your fleſh can ſpare. This is but ſelf-deluding; you muſt in heart and reſolution forſake all that you have, or elſe you cannot be his diſciples, *Luke* xiv. 26, 33. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Chriſt, but you muſt needs alſo have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory be not enough for you, it is in vain to dream of ſalvation on theſe terms, for it will not be. If you ſeem ever ſo religious, if yet it is but a carnal righteouſneſs, and the fleſh's proſperity or pleaſure, or ſafety, be ſtill excepted in your devotedneſs to God, this is as certain a way to death as open profaneneſs, tho' it may be more plauſible.

Direct. X. If you will turn and live, do it "reſolvedly," and ſtand not ſtill deliberating, as if it were a doubtful caſe: Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain whether God or the fleſh be the better maſter; or whether heaven or hell be the better end; or whether

ſin

ſin or holineſs be the better way. But away with your former luſts, and preſently, habitually, fixedly reſolve. Be not one day of one mind, and the next of another, but be at a point with all the world, and reſolvedly give up yourſelves, and all you have to God. Now while you are reading or hearing this, reſolve. Before you ſleep another night, reſolve. Before you ſtir from the place, reſolve. Before Satan hath time to take you off, reſolve. You never turn indeed till you do reſolve, and that with a firm unchangable reſolution.—*So much for the Directions.*

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn at the call of God, and live; what will become of it? I cannot tell; I have caſt the ſeed at God's command, but it is not in my power to give the increaſe. I can go no farther with my meſſage; I cannot bring it to your hearts, nor make it work; I cannot do your parts for you to entertain and conſider of it; I cannot do God's part, by opening your heart to cauſe you to entertain it: nor can I ſhew you heaven or hell to your eye-ſight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your converſion, I hope I ſhould do it.

But, O thou, that art the gracious Father of ſpirits, thou haſt ſworn thou delighteſt not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they may turn and live; deny not thy bleſſing to thoſe perſuaſions and directions, and

ſuffer

ſuffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy ſight; and the great deceiver of ſouls to prevail againſt thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word. O pity poor unconverted ſinners, that have no hearts to pity themſelves: Command the blind to ſee, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not ſin and death be able to reſiſt thee.— Awaken the ſecure, reſolve the unreſolved, confirm the wavering, and let the eyes of ſinners, that read theſe lines, be next employed in weeping over their ſins; and bring them to themſelves and to thy Son, before their ſins have brought them to perdition. If thou ſayſt but one word, theſe poor endeavours ſhall proſper to the winning of many a ſoul, to their everlaſting joy, and everlaſting glory. *Amen.*

THE END.

EBEN. LARKIN, jun.

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